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**Religion and revolution in Iran: Ali Shari'ati's contributions to  
the revival of Shi'ism**

**Yousefi-Ghadim, Mohammad Naghi, Ph.D.**

**New York University, 1990**

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**RELIGION AND REVOLUTION IN IRAN  
ALI SHARI'ATI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE REVIVAL OF SHI'ISM**

**M. NAGHI YOUSEFI-GHADIM**

**February 1990**

A dissertation in the Department of Sociology submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at New York University.

Approved by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Juan E. Corradi', is written over a horizontal line.

Professor Juan E. Corradi

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 1520, Luther published three important pamphlets which were distributed among the German people. These led the way for his eventual revolutionary break with Rome.<sup>1</sup> In his first pamphlet, The Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, he demanded that the Germans reform their church as well as their society. Witnessing unfair business practices and a low morality among the people and the apathy of the papacy and church councils, he turned to the secular state for help.<sup>2</sup> He encouraged German rulers to undertake vast educational, legal and social reforms. The second pamphlet, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, was a theological manuscript and was written in Latin. In this pamphlet he condemned the papacy who had denied Christians the right of approaching God directly. The third pamphlet was, The Freedom of the Christian Man, which he wrote in October of 1520. Altogether, Luther proposed two essential changes in German society:

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<sup>1</sup>Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era 1500-1650 (London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1970), pp. 132-34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

First, he re-stated the teachings of Christ in favor of more religious liberty for mankind and less papal interference.

The second issue that was raised by Luther, was on the separation of church and state. The two are distinct because God gave them each a separate function:

The church was to serve God and man through the preaching of the gospel, and the state was to enforce law and order, maintain public safety, and protect lands and people.<sup>3</sup>

Not far from Wittenburg where Luther had begun his lectures, Calvin (1509-1564), had undertaken another step toward reformation in Geneva. To matters concerning the political, economic and social spheres of life, not unlike Luther, Calvin gave high priority, but he went even further by emphasizing the participation of every individual Christian in rebellion against an unjust and irreligious government.

Success in business came to be looked upon as an evidence of self-denial and hard work to the glory of God.<sup>4</sup>

Calvin's teachings and motivations in Geneva are not unrelated to the rise of capitalism in Europe at the same

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<sup>3</sup>Altman K. Swihart, Luther and the Lutheran Church (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960), p. 162.

<sup>4</sup>Harold Grimm, p. 349.



time. According to one view, Calvin did not allow for the division of church and state and believed that they were the same.<sup>5</sup> He believed in a theocracy not to be ruled by the clergy, but by the mutual administration of the church and the state. It was the duty of every Christian to obey such a theocracy or any form of government, according to Calvin, even if that government happens to be a tyrannical one.<sup>6</sup> Even for Luther, the cruelty of a king was God's way of punishing the sins of His people.<sup>7</sup>

While Luther and Calvin were both caught up in the midst of the rise of capitalism and nationalism, they were both also concerned about their immediate environments and the issues facing such environments. Both men were above all committed to the revival and reinterpretation of the teachings of Christ which were being abused and misrepresented by church authorities. While Luther was much concerned about breaking ties with the papacy in Rome, Calvin was more preoccupied with his involvement in the political, economic and social affairs of Geneva.

Four centuries later, in a different continent and a different environment, Ali Shari'ati was determined to under-

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<sup>5</sup>Sylvia Benians, From Renaissance to Revolution (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press Inc., 1923), p. 41.

<sup>6</sup>Harold Grimm, p. 339.

<sup>7</sup>Altman Swihart, p. 165.

take the mission that Calvin and Luther had accomplished in 16th century Europe. He believed that political reformers of societies like Iran that resembled pre-Reformation Europe, had to learn from Calvin and Luther.<sup>8</sup> Shari'ati's concerns were also the social, economic and political factors facing Iran as well as a misrepresented and misinterpreted religion, Islam or Shi'ism. While Luther and Calvin were both accused of heresy, so was Shari'ati; however, he was facing condemnation from reactionary religious authorities as well as government officials. Luther lived under favorable political conditions for himself as he found great sympathy for his cause from the German princes. Upon his return to Iran in 1965, Shari'ati was a known dissident to the government of the Shah, and he was directly taken to prison before he even had a chance to meet with his family.

This thesis attempts to study the contributions of Shari'ati to Iranian society. These contributions are believed by many to be essential in the transformation of Iranian society in the 1960's and 1970's, the highlight of which was the 1979 Revolution and the collapse of the Pahlavi dynasty. In order to understand and recognize Shari'ati and the mission which he committed himself to, the social, economic and political environment that he lived in,

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<sup>8</sup>Ervand Abrahamian, "Ali Shari'ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution," in Middle East Research & Information Project, Vol. XII, No.1(January, 1982), pp. 24-28.

must be studied. In doing so, an important segment of this study takes a sociological approach to Persian society. Since the socio-political history of Persian society dates back to over twenty five centuries, a point of time was necessary to be considered for the purposes of this study. Since the beginning of the 20th century coincided with two major events in Iran, (the Constitutional Revolution and the collapse of the Qajar dynasty), this period was selected as a relevant background for the socio-political and economic study of Iran.

Having been trained and devoted to sociology, Shari'ati was able to apply his acquired knowledge of this subject to perceive new dimensions in Islam that could not have been possible for him otherwise. His goal, however, did not seem to be a theological revolution, as was the case more or less with Calvin and Luther. The sovereignty of German princes and rise of the secular state as well as the rise of capitalism, are believed to have had some relationship to the contributions of Luther and Calvin; nevertheless, the reinterpretation of the gospel was the primary task and goal of both individuals.

Despite the strong influence that Shari'ati received from his father, who was a devout Shi'ite, he completed his education in secular training and all that he learned about Islam and Shi'ism were from his father and his library, and

later, from his French teacher, Massignon. Shari'ati's training and learning of Islam was not similar to what was taught in the traditional Madreseh (religious school). His writings and interpretations are indicative of this. Shari'ati's active participation in anti-government and anti-Shah clandestine groups and demonstrations inside and outside of Iran suggested that he was perhaps more inclined to envisage and achieve political ends instead of religious ones. Yet, politics and religion, are so intertwined in Shari'ati's life and times that perhaps few could take part in one without the other. At least, this is the paradigm that Shari'ati was trying to establish; that there is no separation of religion and politics in the true doctrine of Islam.

What were the forces in the life of Shari'ati from his childhood to his university training in Europe which made him different from other intellectuals? He was, indeed, different because he was politically active since he was very young and served numerous prison terms for such activities. He did not receive the red carpet treatment that the regime rolled out for other intellectuals returning home from Europe. When entrusted with a professorship in Mashhad University, he alienated himself so much from his colleagues (by presenting topics that were unique and of interest to the students, thus, gaining for himself enormous

popularity), that he was suspected of being a bad influence in that environment and was forced to leave the campus. He was different because he did not welcome the life of luxury that the regime would have provided for him and his family in return for keeping his lectures apolitical and distant from domestic politics. Somehow, he had to link his lectures and writings to political issues and the question of legitimacy of the Shah's rule, and thus, sacrificed his life for his beliefs. In chapter four I will discuss elements that were crucial in Shari'ati's upbringing as a revolutionary political activist and ideologue.

The focus of the rest of this thesis is on Shari'ati's opinions, interpretations and discussions. In chapter five, I will present Shari'ati's interpretations of the Islamic principles in general. The debate over religion as a movement and as an institution is discussed there. In the following chapter, I will discuss Shari'ati's theory of the development of a dichotomous division of Shi'ism that would prove to be very significant in the process of politicization of Shi'ism and mobilization of the masses in the 1979 Revolution in Iran.

If Shari'ati were to be identified with one overriding concern, that would be his desire to give a new political dimension to Shi'ism. Two of his major works were on this subject. The topic was also a frequent theme in his lec-

tures. Shari'ati believed in Shi'ism not just as a religious doctrine, but also as a political ideology. One of the most significant concepts of Shi'ism is the concept of "justice" and Shari'ati's stance in regard to this issue is central to the development of his political ideology.

In an era when religion and any issue related to religion was considered to be archaic, old fashioned and unpopular among the educated and most of the people of upper and middle classes, Shari'ati took the intellectual environment of Iran by surprise. It took considerable courage on his part to declare that the lack of interest and belief in Shi'ism was the outcome of misinterpretations and misrepresentations that the faith had suffered under the clergy. Thus, he added another class of enemies to his long list of opponents. But, this class of the clergy was the traditional and reactionary (Safavid) clergy who did not and could not understand the substance of Shari'ati's approach to Shi'ism. There was, however, another class of clergy who understood Shari'ati's lectures and gave him their blessing (Ayatollah Taleghani), only their number was very small.

Shari'ati's most active and contributing years were from 1967-1972, in Hoseiniyeh Ershad in Tehran at a time that he was under attack from the clergy and under surveillance by the SAVAK which was trying to determine whose side Shari'ati belonged to. The SAVAK was trying to determine if the

accusations of the clergy against him were true and he was indeed a Sunni or a Baha'i, or just a scholar who was trying to give Shi'ism a sociological interpretation, something that the reactionary clergy could not appreciate.

Comparative analysis is widely used by Shari'ati especially in his discussions about justice and about the origins of Shi'ism. Since it would have been too risky to direct his analogy of tyranny and injustice to the Shah's regime, he reinstated the incident of Karbela and the oppression that the household of the Prophet and devout Shi'ites had suffered at the hands of the Umayyids (61/680). For the audience that used to attend Shari'ati's lectures comparison of the injustices of Karbela could perhaps serve as a reminder of the torture chambers of the SAVAK that were used against the regime's dissidents indiscriminately. The regime of the Shah did not try to cover the horrors of these torture chambers, but attempted to make the masses aware of them in order to horrify the dissidents (chapter 2- SAVAK). Thus, as long as there was consensus over the injustice and the tyrannical nature of the regime, all that was needed was a political and moral ideology to mobilize the masses against the regime.

Unlike many intellectuals who become alienated from their native culture after receiving higher education at home or especially abroad, (chapters 3 and 4), in regard to Shari'-

ati, his European education had an adverse affect on him. When he returned home from Europe (1965), he was more determined than ever to write and lecture on issues that were compatible and in conformity with the national and religious culture of Iran. Of course the influence of Western intellectuals and schools of thought are evident throughout Shari'ati's works, and it was his training in sociology that enabled him to put together a synthesis of Islamic dogma, Shi'ite history, national culture and a revolutionary ideology. Massignon, Gurvitch and Fanon were among the people who had the most influence on Shari'ati outside of Iran. Massignon could be credited in directing Shari'ati toward Shi'ism as a revolutionary ideology, and Gurvitch taught him the discipline needed to formulate a revolutionary ideology (Shi'ism).

During the 1979 Revolution in Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini became the unquestioned charismatic leader. He had been living in exile since 1964. Before, while at home, he had waged a one man war against the unconstitutional rule of the Shah. The Ayatollah's clash with the Shah (1963) proved to be abortive despite massive support for the Ayatollah across the country. Four years later, (1967), Shari'ati began his lectures at the Ershad and preached in favor and in praise of the responsible, courageous and committed religious leaders. He also spoke about a revolutionary and



dynamic brand of Shi'ism that would be committed to protest against tyranny and injustice. The ultimate goal of this ideology (Shi'ism) would be to establish the ideal Islamic society, Ummat, with committed and responsible citizens, an Ummat that would have no Western or Eastern orientation or ideology. This was indeed one of the most popular slogans during the revolution of 1979.

## CHAPTER 2: THE PAHLAVIS

### Introduction

The beginning of the 20th century marked a new era in the social and political history of Iran. The events and transitions that took place from the turn of the century were so significant that this period could be identified as the beginning of the "Renaissance" in Iran. The Constitutional Revolution of 1906, was one of the most important political transitions that took place in Iran after 2500 years of absolute monarchy. When the Qajar rulers began to deny the constitutional codes, they themselves terminated their despotic rule in Iran. The Pahlavi Dynasty came to power in 1925, only under the pretense of respect and loyalty to the constitution. Reza Shah, the founder of the dynasty failed to do so and when his son subsequently inherited the throne in 1941, he too, promised to abide by the constitution. In the first ten years of his rule, Persians did enjoy a relaxed political atmosphere which led to the appearance of political parties in Iran for the first time. A period of two years of democratic rule under the premiership of Dr. Mosaddegh was followed by a coup, with the help of the American government, that reinstated the

Shah's rule, which became one of the most repressive governments in modern history. It was the unjust and secular nature of the rule of the Shah that raised questions about his legitimacy to the throne, which forced devout Muslims to examine their relation to the despotic ruler. It was the amalgam of policies of the Pahlavi monarchs as well as the forces of modernization in Persian society that produced, as a reaction, a unique culture of political opposition in Iran. Before studying such culture (chapter 3), the socio-economic and political structure of Iran at the turn of the 20th century, along with the dynamics of the Pahlavi dynasty and the changes that they brought to this society, will be discussed in this chapter.

#### **The Social Structure of Iran at the turn of the century.**

In 1900, the population of Iran (in the absence of any official data and national census) was estimated to be around 10,000,000. Almost half of the 627,000 square miles of the country was uninhabited desert and populated settlements occupied only 15 percent of the total land. The first national census was not taken until 1956. At the turn of the century, only 25 percent of the population lived in urban centers, the largest of which were Tehran and Tabriz each with a population of 200,000, and Esfehan with a popu-

lation of 100,000. Fifty three percent of the total population lived in some 15,000 villages. Even as late as 1979, living conditions were visibly poor in these villages. Lack of health care facilities, public schools, sanitary facilities, electricity and an inadequate supply of food and water were only some of the serious issues facing the rural population of Iran. About one quarter of the nation's population led a nomadic or semi-nomadic existence. These nomads suffered the same quality of life as did the villagers. Also in 1900, there were 21 elementary schools and only one high school in the entire nation in which modern subjects were taught. However, religious and traditional schools were still widespread and their number was most likely higher than modern schools. The literacy rate was estimated at 5 percent and only rose to 15 percent over the next fifty years, and 30-35 percent in 1970.<sup>1</sup>

### Economic Conditions

At the turn of the century, modern industry was totally absent, and Iran was considered an agricultural society. About ninety percent of the working population was engaged in agricultural activities and the remaining ten percent

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<sup>1</sup>Fred Halliday, Iran (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 13.

were active in trades and services.<sup>2</sup> Agricultural products were responsible for eighty to ninety percent of the Gross National Product, which was about \$70 million in 1900. State revenues then were about \$1.3 million, of which 67 percent came from general taxes and 25 percent from customs duties.

Before the turn of the century, Qajar monarchs began to offer concessions to foreign states and individuals. These concessions, especially those in the area of highways, railways, banking, mining, and gas supplies might have contributed to the economic development of the country. It seems, however, that the real intention of the Qajar monarchs was not to boost the economic development of the country, but to fill their own private treasuries. Much of the revenues from such concessions were devoted to covering the expenditures of the frequent royal trips to European countries. The Qajars are reputed to have attempted to sell off the country and its resources by these concessions rather than attempting to bring any material prosperity and progress to the nation.

About eighty percent of the foreign trade was conducted with Russia and Britain. France and Turkey each had seven percent of Iranian share of foreign trade at the turn of the

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<sup>2</sup>Julian Bharier, Economic Development in Iran 1900-1970 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 5.

century. Russia's share of Iranian exports was 58%. The leading export items of the country were: raw vegetable products (50%), animal products (25%), and traditional manufactures (25% of the exported goods). The major imports were manufactured goods (60%), and foodstuffs (30%).<sup>3</sup>

Farming processes and cultivation were done by primitive methods and there were no signs of modern instruments and technology. Until the 1950's and 1960's when revolutionary writers and critics such as Al-e Ahmad and Behrangi began to write about village life, there were no attempts to learn or bring about any changes in the conditions of the rural districts of the country. In the words of Al-e Ahmad, "no village attracts the curiosity of our scholars or the attention of our government authorities or any sympathy on the part of our politicians."<sup>4</sup>

### Political Structure

At the turn of the 20th century, Iran was one of the few nations which had withstood and survived the onslaught of successive invasions: Macedonians, Romans, Arabs, Afghans

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Qwrazan (Tehran: Mazeyar Publications, 1973), from the preface which is in English and translated by Dr. Simin Daneshvar.

and Mongols. The distinguished scholar of Persian history, Edward Browne wrote in this regard:

Of all the ancient nations whose names are familiar to us, Persia is almost the only one which still exists as an independent political unit within her old frontiers (Sadly contracted, it is true, since Darius the Great caused to be engraved on the rocks of Bagastana or Bisutun, in characters still legible, the long list of provinces which obeyed him and brought him tribute), inhabited by a people still wonderful, homogeneous, considering the vicissitudes through which they have passed, and still singularly resembling their ancient forbears. Again and again Persia has been apparently submerged by Greeks, Parthians, Arabs, Mongols, Tatars, Turks and Afghans; again and again she has been broken up into petty states ruled by tribal chiefs; and yet she has always re-emerged as a distinct nation with peculiar and well-marked idiosyncrasies.<sup>5</sup>

However, the collapse of a monarchy which was about two and a half thousand years old, had become a distinct possibility at the turn of the century, as the Qajar monarchs proved to be incompetent rulers. By the close of the nineteenth century, the Qajar rulers had lost interest in governing and administering the national affairs. Eventually, the central government became weak and functionless as there was massive corruption in all of its sectors. This led to two drastic changes in Iranian society. First, it made it possible for foreign powers, especially Russia and Britain to meddle in the internal as well as foreign

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<sup>5</sup>Edward Browne, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. xii.

affairs of Iran. Second, it enabled various tribes to disobey the central government and create territorial autonomy.

In the country-side, the peasants, villagers and nomads, who composed 90% of the total population paid tribute to their feudal lords or, at times, to absentee landowners. There were no signs of a central government in the rural areas. In the capital, a very disorganized army and a small number of men in police uniforms could impose some law and order in certain parts of the town. There were no political parties and organizations and the person of the Shah was in full and complete control of the legislative, executive and judicial organs of the country. The position of the monarch in Iran resembled that of European monarchies in medieval times. In Europe, the king had a twofold function. As a patriarch, he maintained absolute authority over his subjects. This authority however, was seen as being exercised under God which made him a consecrated ruler giving him the responsibility of protecting his subjects<sup>4</sup>.

The most important political event at the turn of the century was the constitutional revolution of 1906. This revolution, even though it had a very short life, had significant effects on the future political and social structures of the country. The most important objective that the

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<sup>4</sup>Reinhard Bendix, Nation-Building and Citizenship (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). p. 40.



masses of the revolutionary patriots were seeking was to limit the overwhelming authority of the royal palace, and to instead offer more participation to the masses in the destiny of their nation. The outcomes and consequences of this revolution will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters.

The political structure of Iran at the turn of the century could be summarized as a nation which was:

- a. ruled by a corrupt and incompetent monarch that chose the government ministers, and was surrounded by the royal favorites and wealthy feudal lords who had no interest in anything other than their own amusement, estate, prosperity and prestige, a condition comparable to European patrimonialism;
- b. influenced and dominated by foreign powers, namely Britain and Russia, which had paramount control of the Persian economy and polity;
- c. Divided by a weak and disorganized central government and army which had made it possible for tribal autonomy to be widespread in the rural parts of the country where paternalism was widely practiced. The army and the central government were so weak that even in the urban areas, including the capital, there were parts of the town which had their affairs run by certain individuals who had political, economic and social control over the inhabitants of

those sections of the town, a condition similar to social banditry in parts of Europe at the onset of modernization, or even in large American cities of today. Any attempt towards the modernization of the economy and industry aroused the disapproval and antagonism of the Russian and British governments. These governments had divided Iran into two economic zones after the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention between those two powers. The North was under the control and supervision of Czarist Russia and the South under British influence. The case of the involvement of an American financial group led by W. Morgan Shuster and the reaction of these two countries reveals their motives and strategy in Iran.

The Shuster mission of 1911, was an episode which led to the military invasion of Persia by Czarist Russia. The incident commenced after the government of Iran, under public pressure, refused to give in to the demand of the Russian government to terminate the services of Morgan Shuster. He and his assistants had been employed by the Persian government to modernize the Persian economy and the ministry of finance. The Czarist regime first presented the Persian government with an ultimatum requesting the dismissal of Shuster. Following the military maneuvers of Russia in the North, the Shah dissolved the Majlis (the Persian Parliament) and therefore gave in to the request of the Russians,

in December 1912 by requesting the American mission to leave the country<sup>7</sup>. In the words of the foreign minister of Persia at the time:

A reformed financial system in Persia would enable the Shah to exercise greater independence vis-à-vis Russia and Britain. The Russians, with British support, could not tolerate this condition.<sup>8</sup>

As a whole, the country could best be described as a society in political, social and economic turmoil. By 1920, even Persia's neighboring countries like Turkey, had begun to change and show some indication of progress, making it more imperative for Iran to terminate its stagnant condition. Persia's neighbors to the North were undergoing rapid changes. Iran had to catch up with the new Soviet regime in Russia and modern Turkey in political, social, scientific and technological advancements to protect itself. This desperation and determination for change and progress was one of the major reasons which led to the downfall of the Qajar dynasty, since by then, the nation had completely lost faith in their ability to promote changes in Iranian society.

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<sup>7</sup>Hosein Makki, Tarikh-e Bist Saleh-ye Iran [The Twenty Year History of Iran] (Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications, 1978), vol. 3, pp. 87-92.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas A. Bryson, American Diplomatic Relations with the Middle-East, 1784-1975: A Survey (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press Inc., 1977), p. 56.

## Iran under the Pahlavi's

### Reza Shah's Life and Career

Reza Shah was born on March 15, 1878 in the northern province of Mazandaran by the Caspian Sea. His father, Major Abbas Ali Khan was the commanding officer of the Savad Kuh regiment. He died only months after Reza Khan was born.

In the same year that Reza Khan was born, Naser-ed-Din Shah, the Qajar Shah then visiting Russia, was impressed with the Cossacks who were guarding the Czar. In this trip, he made arrangements with the Czar to have the Persian Cossack Brigade formed and trained by Russian Cossacks. The Shah also had in mind to use some of these Cossacks as his bodyguards<sup>9</sup>. Reza Khan joined the Cossacks in 1900. He was an infantry soldier at the beginning, but was promoted rapidly to upper ranks because of his ability. It was in the summer of 1920 that the Persian army was involved in some campaigns against the new Soviet army which had occupied parts of Iran. As a result of his bravery and sense of leadership, Reza Khan was promoted to the rank of Amir Panji which was equivalent to full colonel. He was

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<sup>9</sup>Margaret Laing, The Shah (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1977), p. 28.

then given the responsibility of commanding the Cossacks stationed in Qazvin.<sup>10</sup>

The last of the Qajar rulers at this time was Ahmad Shah. This weak and egotistical man had no interest whatsoever in the affairs of the country. He had no desire to rule and his sole interest was to travel and to take extensive leisurely vacations in Europe. It was in the summer of 1920, that he returned home from one of his European tours. Indulging himself with his next trip to Europe, he was concerned and frightened about the new government in Russia. Thinking that the Soviet Union might invade Persia troubled his mind so much that he insisted on moving the capital from Tehran southward to Shiraz where the British could offer more protection. Thus, Ahmad Shah prepared to leave Tehran. A large number of army personnel were required to escort him to the South. The army in Tehran was so disorganized that it could not fulfill the task. The only suitable group of soldiers that could be relied upon were the Cossacks stationed in Qazvin.

It was Seyyid Ziya al-Din (Tabatabai) who arranged for the Cossacks to move to Tehran from Qazvin under the command of Reza Khan. This army of men was expected to escort the Shah out of Tehran, but they turned out to be the usurpers.

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<sup>10</sup>Donald N. Wilber, Reza Shah Pahlavi (Hicksville, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1975), pp. 8-14.

What happened in February 1921, in the words of Seyyid Zia, was only a military coup d'etat.<sup>11</sup> This left Seyyid as Prime Minister and Reza Khan as commander of all the armed forces.

It did not take long before Seyyid Zia was forced to offer Reza Khan the position of Minister of War. Now, Reza Khan enjoyed the title "Sardar Sepah" (Commander of the Army).

Soon a power struggle began between these two, the most powerful men in the country. Ahmad Shah had no significant influence in-between. The conflict led to the resignation of Seyyid Zia, the Prime Minister.

From June 1921 through the next two years, there were four changes in the post of Prime Minister. Finally, on October 28, 1923, Reza Khan came another step closer to his ultimate goal when he was named prime minister by Ahmad Shah, while still maintaining his post as the Minister of War.

As Reza Khan strengthened his position of control, he kept a close eye on events in Turkey. But when he advocated the establishment of a republic in Iran, the proposal met widespread opposition from religious leaders. Consequently, Reza Khan gave it up. It was widely believed that if elected as a president, Reza Khan would end up with

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<sup>11</sup>Wilber, p. 46.

too much power and eventually impose the same secular measures as Ataturk.

In October 1925, Ahmad Shah dispatched a telegram to Reza Khan informing him of his return to Iran from Europe. As soon as the news of Ahmad Shah's return spread throughout the country, anti-Qajar sentiments and demonstrations followed in all cities. Reza Khan took advantage of the situation and called upon some of the deputies of the Majlis. He convinced them to prepare and sign a bill on December 6 1925, which called for the abolition of the Qajar dynasty and entrusted to Reza Khan and his descendants the constitutional monarchy of Persia.

There were widespread rumors that Reza Khan had come to power through the support of the British.<sup>12</sup> Considering the pitiful condition of the country that the Qajars had created, any minor change and improvement by any public figure could win the support of the masses. Hussein Makki, the author of the well documented Tarikhe-e Bist Sale-ye Iran (The Twenty Year History of Iran), gives a lengthy analysis of Reza Khan's coming to power. In his excellent three-volume work on the modern history of Iran, Makki discloses the fact that the British were disappointed with Ahmad Shah. He observes that the British were very optimistic that their secret treaty of August 9, 1919 with Persia would be

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<sup>12</sup>Wilber, p. 51.

accepted by Ahmad Shah without any resistance. It was also in January of 1919, that an international conference in Paris was held to determine the fate and breakdown of the Ottoman Empire. Much to their surprise, he refused to sign the treaty which would have made Iran a protectorate of the British. It was then that the British decided to overthrow the Qajar rule in Iran and to bring a new Shah and dynasty to power that would go along with their plans.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of the validity of Makki's theory, there seemed to be no doubt that there could have been a number of other factors involved, the most important of which was the disappointment of the intelligentsia and of the masses toward the apathy of Qajar rulers.

#### Reza Shah and the Modernization of Iran

Once in full control in December of 1925, Reza Shah advocated three major tasks: to achieve the centralization of the government, to promote the modernization of the army and the economy, and to neutralize the resistance of opposition groups.

Even though Reza Shah did not have any formal educational background, he was more concerned than the Qajar monarchs

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<sup>13</sup>Makki, vol. 3, pp. 13-14. This issue is discussed in more detail in the second volume of Makki's work.



about economic reforms. As a soldier, however, one can understand his ambition to modernize the army. The Qajar rulers, after Naser al-Din Shah were little concerned with reform. Despite his efforts to bring about certain reforms, Reza Khan never won overwhelming support in the country. A significant reason for this lack of support was Reza Shah's denial of the young constitutional revolution. He continued in the tradition of previous rulers to enforce one-man rule in Iran. Though perhaps more violent and brutal than the Qajar rulers, he nevertheless produced changes under his command and supervision that marked the turning point for Iranian society from an archaic one to a more modern social, economical and political entity. His efforts in state building and modernization of the country have been attributed to his sense of patriotism and admiration of the past glorious history of Iran. Reza Shah's personal character with his greed and his authoritarian and dictatorial manner, however, prevented him from achieving all that he wished. Nevertheless, his ambitions in industrializing and modernizing Iran were influenced by the Industrial Revolution in Europe and to an even greater degree, by the changes that were occurring in Persia's neighboring country, Turkey, under the leadership of Ataturk. Such cross-cultural influences had been true in the case of the French enlightenment and its impact on Germany and Russia in the

eighteenth century as well as the influence of European power and industry upon the subsequent development of Japan. Lacking a clear understanding of the roles of culture and religion in his own society, Reza Shah attempted to blindly follow Ataturk's measures in the modernization of Persia. This approach proved to alienate and disenchant large masses of people. In his analysis of the preconditions of development, Bendix remarked that:

Many ideas, technical innovations, and political institutions are either taken over from abroad or developed in conscious reference to changes that have taken place abroad.<sup>14</sup>

One of Reza Shah's significant mistakes was in his cultural imitation of Ataturk. This imitation did not work in Iran, a country where culture and religion are intertwined and have had a different role and impact on the society. The Constitutional Revolution of 1906, had already clarified this notion that there was a limit that the masses in Persia could tolerate unpopular changes imposed by their rulers. Following Ataturk, who was persistent in identifying Turkey with European nations<sup>15</sup>, Reza Shah enforced European styles of clothing for men and women. Part of this adaptation involved the unveiling of the women which aroused

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<sup>14</sup>Bendix, p. 212.

<sup>15</sup>He went so far as changing the Turkish alphabet to the Latin, among other things.

the hostility of the religious leaders and a wide segment of the population. Instead of realizing the potential and significance of cultural and religious norms by allowing them a gradual and indigenous development, Reza Shah's tactics were to use force and suppression. Perhaps Arthur Millspaugh's remarks about Reza Shah best explain his traits:

Like other and greater figures of history, he became a builder, imaginative, restless, ruthless, on an inconceivable scale, and with amazing results.<sup>16</sup>

Once in full control of power, one of the first issues on the mind of the new ruler was the existing chaos and disorder throughout the country. To overcome this obstacle, Reza Shah fully understood that the two necessary steps were to create an organized central government and a strong army. Conscription was introduced into the country for the first time, soon increasing the number of enlisted men in the army from 40,000 to 90,000.<sup>17</sup> For the first time, the Iranian military now possessed gunboats, tanks and airplanes. The modernization of the army was a gradual process that needed time and patience, however. It was Reza Shah's personal ambition and determination that helped him to bring order

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<sup>16</sup>Arthur C. Millspaugh, Americans in Persia (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), p. 27.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

and peace back to the nation. Local territorial autonomy was suppressed in various regions of the country, as well as in and around the larger cities. The authority of the central government as the only ruling body in the country then went unchallenged. This was probably Reza Khan's biggest achievement.

Reza Shah's dedication and effort in building up a strong central government marked the beginning of the transition from a semi-feudal and patrimonial society to a nation-state. Structural developments of Iranian society at the onset of the century resembled those of Europe in an earlier century. Comparative analogies of Reinhard Bendix in his studies of modern Europe reflect a similar situation in Iran:

One unquestioned corollary of this emergence of the nation-state is the development of a body of officials, whose recruitment and policy execution were separated gradually from the previously existing involvement of officials with kinship loyalties, hereditary privileges, and property interests.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, Reza Shah was able indeed to select his officials and ministers from among a newly-emerging middle class for two important reasons. First, he was desperate to undermine the power and authority of the aristocracy and powerful land-owners. Second, the establishment of modern schools and

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<sup>10</sup>Bendix, p. 129.

colleges had given him the opportunity to select individuals with the proper education and training for various government positions, rather than offering those posts to the notables and persons of the royal household as it used to be.

One of the key aspects of modern nation-states, in contrast to a patrimonial type of government, is the existence of the process of bureaucratization, according to Bendix. This was indeed another improvement for which Reza Shah deserved credit. An analysis of Weber's definition of the process of bureaucratization will reveal and emphasize the changes that Reza Shah enforced for improving the Persian bureaucracy.

A bureaucracy, according to Weber, is characterized by:

1. Defined rights and duties
2. Authority relations
3. Appointment and promotion based on contractual agreement
4. Technical training
5. Fixed monetary salaries
6. Administrative work as a full-time occupation.<sup>17</sup>

It is obvious that all of the above characteristics were not created at once and some might well have prevailed before the accession of Reza Shah to the throne, such as technical training and fixed salaries. Under Reza Shah's

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

rule, such practices became more widespread throughout the country.

Throughout the years, opposition groups have made justifiable criticisms of Reza Shah's tactics and rule. However, one element for which he deserves acknowledgement is his persistent involvement in every day state affairs and his dedication to work continuously. It was no doubt due to his constant work, that social banditry in the capital came to an end, as he strengthened the foundation and organization of a unified police department. Once the capital was under control, the existence of the central government was undeniable. A calm and centralized capital now could demand obedience and tutelage from the rest of the country. It was from Tehran that Reza Shah went on the offensive, crushing all of the local lords throughout the country who were claiming territorial autonomy.

Reza Khan was also given credit for building the trans-Persian railroad. At the beginning of its construction, there was debate in the Majlis over the route. Since earlier years, the British were intent to deny any attempts at constructing a railroad in Persia, especially if that line terminated in eastern Iran near the border of Afghanistan or India. Their desire was to preserve the approaches to India from any direct access by rail. On the other hand, the national interest of Iran required that the railroad should

be constructed from Baghdad or northwestern Iran, all the way to the eastern portion of Iran. Mohammad Mosaddegh, among others, was an opponent of the construction of a North-South route which, according to him, was nothing more than a militarily strategic project. He insisted on the construction of an east-west railroad which would serve an economic function rather than a strategic one. Finally, when it was announced that the direction of the railroad was determined to be north-south, it seemed obvious to Reza Khan's critics that he was more interested in serving the colonial powers than the national interest.

The Qajar Shahs did not take many steps towards economic planning or industrialization, and as far as the cultural and political affairs of the country were concerned, the later Qajar kings, in particular, showed no interest. The backward and stagnant economic condition of the Qajar period makes Reza Shah's measures for economic improvement look impressive. Indeed, he might have been able to win for himself considerable popularity if he had accomplished the same level of success in the social and cultural arenas. Unlike the Qajar monarchs, who emptied the treasury for their luxurious European tours and even went further by giving various concessions to foreigners to cover the costs of such trips, Reza Shah refused even to borrow or to accept any foreign financial assistance to safeguard the sovereignty

and independence of the country.<sup>20</sup> As far as social and political issues were concerned however, Reza Shah's dictatorial rule was a failure. His disrespect to the cultural values and to the religious institution, and rejection of the constitutional codes and political liberties, proved to be major sources of resentment against him. Perhaps his most destructive move was ending the few remnants of the constitutional revolution of 1906. Among these were freedom of the press, speech and free elections. Gradually, he crushed every democratic and nationalist figure and movement that stood in his way. Thus, he put an end to the constitutional movement and brought back autocratic government to Iran under the banner of modernization.

The tribes who were considered to be one of the major sources of pastoral products in the country, faced destruction of their way of life in the hands of Reza Khan's army. He registered a vast territory of land in his own name, some of which was acquired by force from landlords who had fallen out of favor. His intention here was to overwhelm the large landowners and feudal strong men so that his authority in the country would be unchallenged.

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<sup>20</sup>Charles Issawi, "The Iranian Economy 1925-1975: Fifty Years of Economic Development"; ed. George Lenczowski: Iran Under the Pahlavis (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), pp. 133.



As the Shah, and as the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, Reza Shah was determined to build up a strong army in Iran. Much to his despair, during the onset of World War II, as the Allied forces moved to occupy Iran, he would learn the truth about his so-called "modern" army which could not face the Allied forces. Many troops abandoned the royal army. On September 16, 1941 as the Allied forces occupied Iran, Reza Shah abdicated in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza. The rapid collapse of the Shah's showcase army was a good illustration of Reza Khan's military limitations. It was not a well-equipped army, and consequently lacked morale. Throughout the country and in every institution, just as in the army, the heritage of the Qajar dynasty proved to be difficult to abandon. That heritage was best seen in continued widespread corruption. Having established a strong dictatorial regime, Reza Shah's regime proved to be more repressive than that of the previous rulers. Some of the Western-style reforms by Reza Shah satisfied only a small portion of the population. Reza Shah might have meant and aimed to bring progress and prosperity to Iran, but he was so preoccupied with monopolizing his power and authority in the country that he simply failed to recognize the most important national tasks for the improvement of the country: political freedom and democracy. It could not have been said better than what Arani (arrested in 1937 along with 52

other members for forming a clandestine socialist group) said in his trial: "If you wish to adopt Western clothes, Western styles, Western institutions, Western technology, and Western way of life, you must also adopt Western political philosophies."<sup>21</sup> Whatever changes that Reza Shah had forced upon the nation, even though some were positive, people throughout the country suspected his intentions and good will because he used force instead of reason, and because he did not even consider giving the constitution a chance to work.

#### Mohammad Reza Shah

At the time he inherited the crown, Prince Mohammad Reza was 21 years old. A few months after his coronation, he signed a treaty with the Allied forces. This treaty recognized the overall integrity of Iran and promised the departure of the Allied forces from Persian soil after the war.

Mohammad Reza Shah's rule from 1941 to 1979 can be divided into two periods. The first period stretched from 1941 to the rise of Mosaddegh in 1951. The second period followed the post-Mosaddegh period. The first ten years witnessed a weak and powerless monarch who was known to the

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<sup>21</sup>Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 162.

rest of the world as a playboy. Politically the occupation of Iran by Allied forces had a humiliating effect. Economically, the country's condition became worse than ever. Corruption still prevailed all over the country. According to Arthur Millspaugh, "In the Persian government of 1943, dishonesty had become almost universal and practically a matter of routine."<sup>22</sup>

In the tradition and footsteps of his father, Mohammad Reza Shah was eager to modernize Iran and to complete his father's task. However, as in the beginning of his father's rule, the new Shah was also faced with major challenges. The most difficult of these was the occupation by the Allies. At the termination of the World War II, The Allied forces left Iran after signing a treaty acknowledging the autonomy and independence of Iran and the succession of the Pahlavi dynasty.

Reunification of the Province of Azerbaijan in the northwest, was the Shah's first test of his will to rule Iran. All waited to see if he had any resemblance to his father. The Shah dispatched an army and crushed the separatist sentiment in Azerbaijan led by Pische-vari and supported by the Soviet army.

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<sup>22</sup>Arthur Millspaugh, Americans in Persia (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1946), p. 83.

The new Shah took other steps unusual in recent Persian history to win the hearts of the masses. Among his early moves were the granting of amnesty to political prisoners; the returning of "Vaqf" (charity) land to the religious class (Ulama); the founding of a theology college in Tehran and the returning of much of his father's estate to the government to be distributed among the original owners. Above all he tried to convince the public that he did not possess a dictatorial nature like his father.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that the Young Shah was different from his father, and certainly did not display the same qualities, such as brutality, harshness, despotic rule and an egotistical nature, in the first decade of his rule can be explained, in part, by the developments that took place in this period in Iran.

For the first time in modern Persian history, political parties came into existence. The most important of these were the, "Hezb-e Tudeh-yeh Iran" (The party of the Iranian masses), which was founded by a group of Marxists; and "Jebhe-ye Melli" (The National Front), led by Dr. Mosaddegh. The Tudeh party was founded during the first year of the Shah's rule (1941) and The National Front was founded in 1949.

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<sup>23</sup>Abrahamian, pp. 176-77.

The founders of the Tudeh party were all in jail while Reza Shah was in power, some since 1937. Immediately after his abdication, the new Shah's amnesty freed them. They founded and organized the party soon after their release from prison.<sup>24</sup>

Dr. Mosaddegh, the founder of The National Front, the most popular political party in Iran, was also in exile on his estate in Ahmad Abad outside of Tehran during Reza Shah's rule. The relaxed political atmosphere of the new Shah in his early years allowed Dr. Mosaddegh to return to politics.

Aside from political parties, the Ulama were gaining back their power. The most prominent religious leader at this time was Ayatollah Kashani who enjoyed considerable power and popularity among the masses, as well as with the government. Unlike his father, the new Shah was trying to convince the public and the religious authorities that he would not interfere with the religious beliefs and ceremonies, and would show his respect for them. One of the most drastic measures of Reza Shah, the forceful removing of the veil, was rescinded by the new Shah.

In the period from 1941 to 1951, that is, from the rise of the new Shah to power until his clash with Dr. Mosaddegh, authoritarian rule did not prevail in Iran. After the

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<sup>24</sup>Abrahamian, pp. 281-82.

tyrannic and repressive rule of Reza Shah, his son's attitudes about ruling were met with enthusiasm and there were hopes for revival of constitutionalism in the country. Two important factors seem to have contributed to this political atmosphere. First, the Shah, having seen the results of his father's unpopular reign and its consequences, was determined to adopt a different attitude towards monarchy. He had decided not to make the same mistakes against the religious institution of the country. He also tried to avoid being brutal like his father, and therefore allowed political activities to resume. There was never a similar repression during this period as there had been during Reza Shah's rule. The second factor was the Shah's educational background in Switzerland, in which he took pride and where he claimed exposure to Western democracy. Regardless of the events which took place in the post-Mosaddegh period, the new Shah seemed to have promoted Western-style democracy and more or less did try to fit himself into the constitutional codes of 1906. Consequently, the Majlis was on its way to independence from the court, and the masses were beginning to have more participation in the political affairs of the country.

The Majlis and the general public composed only two of the several poles of the political power and structure in Iran. The court and foreign embassies still possessed some

influence in the political affairs of the country. Thus, until the rise of Dr. Mosaddegh to the premiership, there was no stable government in Iran. During the period 1941-1953, there were 12 premiers, 31 cabinets and 148 ministers.<sup>23</sup> Arthur Millspaugh, who was working as a financial adviser in Iran at this period, wrote that between the years of 1943-44 alone there were four Prime Ministers and seven Ministers of Finance.<sup>24</sup> Such a political situation, may, among other things, imply anarchy in the society. However, the most important failure of this unstable government was the fact that there was more than one man ruling the country. All the premiers who came to office in this period had conserved more or less of their constitutional power and had plenty of room for political maneuvers. The ministers also had the power to use their ingenuity to implement changes in various aspects of Persian society. Abrahamian claims that the political structure of this period was the result of "deep-seated conflicts" that were transformed in this decade's political arena.<sup>25</sup> The significant sociological implication of this period was the fact that masses of people from different social strata began to participate in the political affairs of the country more than ever in the

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<sup>23</sup>Abrahamian, p. 170.

<sup>24</sup>Millspaugh, p. 87.

<sup>25</sup>Abrahamian, p. 171.

history of Persian society. This could be the most important fact of the first decade of the Shah's rule in Iran, and a turning point of the country in its transition to a modern society.

The elections for the fourteenth Majlis took place in the fall of 1943, at a time when there was a shortage of honorable and dedicated men in the political affairs of the country. Dr. Mosaddegh gave the best description of the houses of parliament in his speech of March 6, 1945. He called it "a den of thieves"<sup>22</sup>. The Shah had no interest, no desire, and certainly no ability to change the status quo. Consequently, when Prime Minister Mosaddegh rose to power in 1951, the Shah chose to escape from the country (See Ch. 3). The two had irreconcilable differences among which nationalization of oil and constitutional codes were the most significant. It was as a result of his conflicts with Mosaddegh that the Shah began to lose his popularity among the masses. Shortly after the fall of Mosaddegh, the Shah returned to Iran, but this time with a different vision and attitude. The Shah, now with more experience, and owing his restoration to the throne to the U.S. government, allowed more supervision by the Americans in internal as well as in external policies. The oil dispute was negotiated with the intervention of Americans. The SAVAK

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<sup>22</sup>Millsbaugh, p. 86.



(secret police of the Shah) was formed with the advice of Americans and Israelis. Soon, the whole country was filled with American advisers in every possible field. The involvement of the American government secured the throne for the Shah and more than two decades of despotic rule was established over the Iranian nation. Amin Saikal made this observation clearly:

By economic maneuvering and political repression, based largely on the strength that it acquired from its dependence on the United States, the Shah's regime had largely succeeded by the 1950s in establishing absolute rule in Iran.<sup>27</sup>

It was after the Shah's return to Iran that thousands of members of opposition groups, especially the "Tudeh" and the "National Front," were tried and executed. The opposition press was banned and the remaining journals and newspapers were prohibited from criticizing the members of the royal family. No independent comments, editorials or articles could appear on international issues without the permission and censorship of the government. There was a serious attempt to coopt Persian intellectuals so that they would support the Western penetration into Iran and the Shah's lenience towards the West. There was also massive propaganda against Communism by various government agencies.

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<sup>27</sup>Amin Saikal, The Rise and Fall of the Shah (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 64.

After abolishing opposition in Iran, the Shah began to strengthen his power in and around Iran. His vision now, for Iran, was the "great civilization" or "Tamaddon-e-Bozorg". Tamaddon-e Bozorg for the Shah was the creation of a second America in a generation with the money that oil was bringing to Iran. Kapuscinski had diagnosed the misconceptions of the Shah adequately: "Oil is a resource that anesthetizes thought, blurs vision, corrupts."<sup>30</sup> This is precisely what happened to the Shah: " Oil fills us with such arrogance that we begin believing we can easily overcome such unyielding obstacles as time. With oil, the last Shah used to say, I will create a second America in a generation! He never created it."<sup>31</sup> By using the oil revenues, he believed that he could modernize the Iranian army and raise the living standards to the level of industrialized Western nations with the support of the United States. This was indeed the point that the Shah made in an interview with Der Spiegel correspondent: "In ten years we will have the same living standards that you Germans, French, and English have now."<sup>32</sup> Such an ambition and high hopes for his nation should make him a very popular leader. The fact was that

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<sup>30</sup>Ryszard Kapuscinski, Shah of Shahs

Translated from the Polish by: William r. Brand and K. Mroczkowska-Brand. (Vintage Books, New York, 1986), p. 35.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

the majority of the Persians were not only amused by the Shah's assertions and illusions, they were highly critical of the methods and directions that he had adopted:

All of you just sit there in the shadow of the mosque and tend your sheep, because it will take a century for you to be of any use! I on the other hand have to build a global empire in ten years with the help of foreigners. This is why the great civilization struck Iranians as above all a great humiliation.<sup>33</sup>

The army and the SAVAK provided security for the royal family against any opposition or uprising. The unrest of 1963 in support of Ayatollah Khomeini was a good illustration of the loyalty of the army and the SAVAK to the Shah. The uprisings were suppressed with heavy loss of life and the ultimate exile of the Ayatollah.

#### **The Mosaddegh Experience and its Impact on the Shah**

he Shah's confrontation with Premier Mosaddegh and his subsequent flight from the country, had a devastating effect both on the mind and on the outlook of the Shah toward his rule as a monarch. Following his return to Iran in 1953, there were no signs of the liberal-minded monarch he once claimed to be. On the contrary, he made sure that key members of the Tudeh and National Front parties were tried and

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

executed. He went one step further and banned all opposition press and political parties.

This period, beginning in 1953 to the collapse of the Shah's regime in 1979, can be classified as one of the most repressive periods in the social and political history of Iran. Like his father, the Shah established one-man rule in Iran and he personally engineered social and political reforms. To ensure that the Mosaddegh experience would not be repeated, the following steps were taken: "The Shah expanded the military and improved its equipment. The number of men in the armed forces rose from 120,000 to over 200,000 by 1963. The annual military budget for the same period increased from \$80 million to \$183 million."<sup>4</sup> As Commander in Chief of the armed forces, the Shah met with high ranking army personnel on a regular basis to assure their loyalty and the service of their men for himself. By keeping a close eye on the army, the Shah was relieved of the possibility of any coup attempts from the army.

Once he secured his control in the country, the Shah began to implement his plans for economic and social reform. In order to convince the masses in and outside of Iran that he was also determined to bring about political reform and democracy in Iran, he advocated a two party system in the country. These parties were formed by the Shah's personal

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<sup>4</sup>Abrahamian, p. 420.

courtiers and were called "Hezb-e Mardom" (people's party) and "Hezb-e Melliyun" (The Nationalists' Party). The Shah's proposal for a two-party system in the country was that:

If I were a dictator rather than a constitutional monarch, then I might be tempted to sponsor a single dominant party such as Hitler organized or such as you find today in communist countries. But as a constitutional monarch I can afford to encourage large scale party activity free from the straight-jacket of one-party rule or the one-party state.<sup>33</sup>

At the zenith of his power in 1975, however, he dissolved both parties and proposed a single party system. This party was to be named the Resurgence Party (Hezb-e Rastakhiz). Membership in this party was to be encouraged for all the Iranians and the Shah bluntly announced that those opposing this party had two choices: Either to go to jail, or to leave Iran<sup>34</sup>.

While we are studying the reign of the late Shah in the perspective of pre- and post-Mosaddegh periods, the Shah himself also divided his term of monarchy into two periods. The dividing point in his reign, according to himself, was June 1963, the date that he proclaimed his "White Revolution".

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<sup>33</sup>Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Mission for my Country (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 173.

<sup>34</sup>Abrahamian, p. 440.

In order to appreciate the Shah's one-man revolution, it is worthwhile to review briefly some theoretical aspects of revolution from sociology. Theda Skocpol writes:

Social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below.<sup>37</sup>

Skocpol differentiates social revolutions from rebellions and political revolutions. The former does not initiate any structural change and the latter fails to transform social structures. What makes a social revolution unique is the occurrence of changes in the social and political structures simultaneously. Class struggles also play a key role in these "Intense sociopolitical conflicts" according to Skocpol.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, social revolutions have been identified as the dominant forces in transforming nations and societies to a position of power and strength which was non-existent in prerevolutionary periods in such societies. French and Russian revolutions are cited as instances where both nations became super powers after their respectful revolutions. Social revolutions have also enabled some countries like Cuba and Vietnam to break away from dependency. A rising

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<sup>37</sup>Theda Skocpol, States & Social Revolutions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 4.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-5.

revolutionary class (Marx), violence and change (Chalmers Johnson) are among the distinguishing features of social revolutions.

In his study of world revolutions, Barrington Moore divided the ensuing political systems into three main categories: Capitalist-Democratic, Fascist, and Communist. The question which was raised by Barrington Moore was whether these typologies could be applied to Asian political institutions "without being wrenched beyond all recognition."<sup>39</sup> Following the guidelines of Moore's definitions of various forms of revolution, the Shah's White Revolution could best be described as "modernization by a revolution from above."<sup>40</sup> Evidently it could not fall under the category and definition of a social revolution given above by Skocpol and at best could only be acknowledged as a combination of reform prospects.

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<sup>39</sup>Barrington Moore, Jr. Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 160.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. xv.

### The White Revolution

The "White Revolution" was enacted in 1963 by the Shah which, in the beginning, consisted of a six point plan. It was called "White", because the revolutionary process was supposed to follow no disorder, bloodshed, and not even class hatred.<sup>41</sup> Three more points were added later. The Shah claimed all the credit for his White Revolution:

The realization came to me that Iran needed a deep and fundamental revolution that could, at the same time, put an end to all the social inequalities....<sup>42</sup>

Social and political events that took place at the beginning of the 1960's indicate that credit lay elsewhere. In this period, a domestic economic crisis had forced Iran to seek money from the International Monetary Fund as well as from the U.S. to overcome a severe budget deficit. Both the IMF and the Kennedy administration promised to loan Iran considerable sums provided certain conditions were met by the Shah. The IMF demanded some developmental projects. The U.S. government demanded social and liberal reforms, being concerned only that such reforms would safeguard Iran from Communism.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Saikal, p. 80.

<sup>42</sup>Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, The White Revolution (Tehran: Kayhan Press, no date), p. 15.

<sup>43</sup>Abrahamian, p. 422.



To satisfy the IMF and the Kennedy administration, the Shah appointed Dr. Mosaddegh's finance minister, Dr. Ali Amini, as the Prime Minister. Having been an advocate of land reform since the 1940's, Amini appointed a radical journalist by the name of Hasan Arsanjani as Minister of Agriculture. Arsanjani, like Amini, was also an advocate of land reform in Iran.<sup>44</sup>

Dr. Amini's premiership lasted only fourteen months during which time the Land Reform Act was promoted, with its main goal to create an independent class of farmers. With the resignation of Amini, land reform ceased until it was declared to be one of the Shah's major points in his White Revolution almost a year later, but without reference to Amini or Arsanjani.

The nine points of the revolution were as follows:

1. Land Reform
2. Nationalization of forests and pastures
3. Public sale of state-owned factory shares
4. Profit sharing in Industry
5. Reform of the electoral law
6. The literacy corps
7. The health corps
8. The reconstruction and development corps
9. The houses of equity

It was in a January 1963 referendum that the government announced that 99.9 percent of the voters endorsed the Shah's White Revolution. Only a few months later, mass

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 423.

uprisings against the Shah's regime indicated the unpopularity of the points of the revolution as The National Front and Ayatollah Khomeini called for the denunciation of the revolution. It took the regime several days to suppress the nationwide unrest (chapter three).

### The Pahlavi "Reign of Terror"

Following the 1963 uprisings, the "reign of terror" and repression of dissidents began. Even though point five of the Shah's revolution called for reform of the electoral law, that was as far as it went. In the parliamentary election, even an illusion of a free election could not occur in the minds of the masses because of the repressive environment that the Shah had created. Indeed the Shah himself wrote:

In our noble revolution, the two sacred principles already mentioned, emphasis on spirit and religion and preservation of individual and social freedom, have been fully observed, as has the general principle that every kind of exploitation that benefited the interests of a limited group but acted to the detriment of the majority must be discarded.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>The White Revolution, p. 17.

Preservation of individual and social freedoms, claimed by the Shah, would apply to the masses only as long as they would not engage in political issues. Absolute censorship became the norm in Iran. The mass media were under the supervision and control of the state. No one in the entire country was allowed to criticize the Shah, his family, any official or government figure. The White Revolution of the Shah was the beginning of the most repressive era of the Pahlavis.

In the international arena, the Shah's White Revolution was a huge political achievement, as media throughout the world praised the Shah and his revolution. Domestically, the crushing of the 1963 uprising ensured the Shah and his Western supporters of a stable regime in Iran. It was now up to the Shah to strengthen his domestic position so that the events of 1952 and 1963 would not repeat themselves. This indeed he committed himself to, and gave first priority. He began to concentrate on building and strengthening two institutions: the military and the SAVAK.

In the formation of the SAVAK, Sazeman-e Amniyat va Ettela'at-e Keshvar, (Organization of National Security and

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Information), the United States government was directly involved since both the FBI and the CIA laid its foundation.<sup>46</sup> The SAVAK was the Shah's secret police. Its job was to hunt down dissidents of the regime and to bring them to "justice". The number of those employed by the SAVAK was never disclosed. The Shah himself admitted to a figure of 4000 members.<sup>47</sup> There is no doubt that the actual figure was much higher than this. What is important is that the SAVAK played a detrimental psychological role in Iran. It created an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust among the entire population. The masses, in their everyday lives, suspected each other of being SAVAK agents. Knowing of the subsequent tortures by SAVAK in the case of detention, they refused to criticize the Shah and his regime openly. The fear of SAVAK had become a nightmare in the lives of the Iranian people, since just imagining the methods of torture could horrify them. Kapuscinski described the role of this organization as:

Iran belonged to SAVAK, but within the country the police acted like an underground organization that appeared then disappeared, hiding its tracks, leaving no forwarding address. Yet, at the same time, some of its sections existed officially. SAVAK censored the press, books, and films (it was SAVAK that banned the plays of Shakespeare and Moliere because they criticized monarchical and

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<sup>46</sup>Halliday, 1980; and Saikal, 1980; among others.

<sup>47</sup>Saikal, p. 190.

aristocratic vices). SAVAK ruled in the universities, offices, and factories. A monstrously overgrown cephalopod, it entangled everything, crept into every crack and corner, glued its suckers everywhere, ferreted and sniffed in all directions, scratched and bored through every level of existence.<sup>48</sup>

Methods of torture were known to all Iranians since the regime was not only not embarrassed, but openly insisted on publicizing the consequences of opposing the regime.

In order to have an idea of SAVAK's bureaucratic organization, Fred Halliday recognized the following separate units within the SAVAK:

- a. personnel
- b. prisons
- c. liaison with foreign espionage
- d. cooperation with the police and military intelligence
- e. spying on citizens abroad
- f. internal security and action

The last unit, according to Halliday, was divided into other subunits and was responsible for domestic repression.<sup>49</sup> Agents of the SAVAK would detain any person whom they suspected of being an opponent of the Shah or of his regime. There were no legal procedures or reasons for the arrests given and the detainees had no right to seek legal assistance. Families of the detainees could have no

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<sup>48</sup>Kapuscinski, p. 46.

<sup>49</sup>Halliday, p. 80.

information of the whereabouts of their sons or daughters, and once detained by the SAVAK, they could expect anything from torture to assassination. At times the families of detainees could also be subjected to interrogation and psycho- logical torture by the SAVAK agents. The trials of the suspects and dissidents were all held before military tribunals, their judges were army and SAVAK officials, and were all held in secret.

Throughout Iran and abroad, the inhumane methods of torture by the SAVAK were no secret. In Iran, the government had no reservations about publicizing these methods in order to intimi- date the public and, most especially, the opposi- tion. Methods employed were: "whipping and beating, elec- tric shocks, extraction of nails and teeth; pumping hot water into the rectum, hanging heavy weights from the testicles, tying the detainees to heated metal tables, inserting broken bottles into the anus, and rape."<sup>80</sup>

Such were the results and outcomes of the Shah's noble revolution and the so called "preservation of individual freedom". Since SAVAK's foundation in 1957, thousands of Iranian dissidents suffered death and torture at their hands. This brutality was symbolic of the Shah's regime and his own personal achievement in Iran. The largest class of victims was among university students, where opposition to

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<sup>80</sup>Halliday, p. 87.

the Shah's tyrannic rule was at its height. Like the number of SAVAK agents, the number of those killed or imprisoned by the SAVAK has never been disclosed. The Shah himself admitted to a figure of 3000 political prisoners, however, this number was very far from reality.

### **Sources of Opposition: Imbalanced Modernization**

In the last few decades, the study of modernization has been one of the more popular subjects of investigation among social scientists. Germani rightfully refers to it as a great transformation of mankind.<sup>21</sup> The subject of modernization encompasses a wide spectrum of human society, from economic, technological and political to attitudinal changes of members of the society. Most social scientists have examined modernization in three areas: economic, political, and social. Economic modernization is usually measured by the level of industrialization of a nation. Political modernization is measured by mass mobilization and participation in the political affairs of the society. Social modernization is concerned with changes in the values, norms and attitudes of the people.

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<sup>21</sup>Gino Germani, The Sociology of Modernization (Transaction Books, New Brunswick, N.J., 1981), p. 9.

When modernization began in Europe, those societies undergoing modernization experienced changes in all three areas simultaneously. The degree of change in each area might have been different in each society. Nevertheless, most of the changes that took place involved economic, political, and social aspects. This trend, however, was not followed by the late modernizers who, more or less, intended to follow in the footsteps of the early modernizers. In the case of Iran, the Pahlavi dynasty was too offensive in the area of social modernization. It completely ignored the political area and its efforts for economic modernization were mediocre. In other words, the Pahlavi dynasty made changes in Persian society that were culturally too offensive and socially alienating, too dictatorial politically and intermediate economically. The result was indeed a contradictory process, a policy that had created obvious contradictions in Persian society.<sup>52</sup> The masses of the people constantly wondered and questioned themselves about the nature of such contradictions: This is an Islamic nation, why do we have casinos, discotheques and prostitution houses? Alcohol is forbidden in Islam. Why so many bars and liquor stores around us? With all the revenue that the oil is bringing to our nation (twenty billion dollars

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<sup>52</sup>Jerrold D. Green, Revolution in Iran (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), p. xi.



annually), why do not we have highways and descent roads, hospitals, universities, and sewage systems in our cities? And most of all, why not have the freedom to express our grievances? And if we do, why should we be arrested, detained and tortured by SAVAK? The Shah wants Iran to be like France, Germany, or the United States. They do not have SAVAK, why should we? Who is the Shah to dictate to us that we have to join his political party, or otherwise leave Iran? Was not he himself put into power by the American C.I.A.? He is a puppet and all his ministers are a bunch of thieves, yet he orders us to leave our homeland! What has he done for Iran or for the people of Iran? Has he been to the villages that Samad was teaching? He does not know about the existence of such villages in our country? If he does, why does not he do anything about them. And if he does not, what kind of a monarch is he? People knew what kind, the kind that would allow a Lufthansa chartered airliner carry select groups of the Shah's lackies every day to Munich airport to be driven to elegant restaurants by limousines, have their lunch and fly back to Tehran for dinner. The cost was only two thousand dollars a head,<sup>23</sup> and thanks to Samad, now there was no doubt that this life of luxury prevailed at a time that Samad's pupils were fainting in the classroom from hunger and lack of adequate and proper nutrition. The lit-

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<sup>23</sup>Kapuscinski, pp. 62-3.

erate masses read about these, and those who could not read travelled to the towns and cities. After watching what was to them a life of luxury, they went back to the villages and told their fellow villagers. Then, everyone throughout the country, except those few connected one way or the other to the Shah's palace, began to wonder and ask why? Twenty billion dollars and we do not have heating oil in our rural classrooms and we supply the world with it. Twenty billion dollars a year and we do not have a half decent public transportation?

To these questions and contradictions, the Shah just expressed more and more arrogance and pretended as if none of these conditions existed. The Qajar monarchs showed such apathy and that was why the masses despised them and eventually deposed them. Why tolerate the Pahlavis? Because they have modernized Persian economy at last, and have brought modern technology to Iran? Indeed, this was the impression that the Shah was determined to sell to the Persians as well as the foreigners. The latter, since they could not see it, perhaps they believed him. But how could he convince the Iranians about his technological achievements with a bunch of assembly plants, shoe factories and a steel mill that was run by the Soviet engineers. Not only was Iran technologically dependent on the West, but thanks to the Shah's White Revolution and Land Reform, the country

had no longer a self-sufficient agriculture. Even rice and grain had to be imported from abroad now.

Perhaps the following analysis by Nikki Keddie, one of the experts on the modern history of Iran, would sum up the economic and technological accomplishments of the Pahlavi monarchs in Iran:

... the Shah showed a growing interest in modernizing Iran's economy and society and in making the country Western in character and militarily strong. In this he followed his father's precedent, but whereas Reza Shah, with fewer economic resources and much lower oil income, had minimized economic dependence on the West in his modernization program, Mohammad Reza greatly increased it.<sup>54</sup>

This increasing dependence on the West antagonized the masses against the Shah and his regime. He gave priority and preference to the interests of those who had reinstated him as a monarch, not to those of the Iranian people.

#### Summary

A brief review of the socio-political conditions of Iran is crucial to gain a clear understanding of Shari'ati's role and contributions in this society. It was pointed out in this chapter how the constitutional codes which guaranteed

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<sup>54</sup>Nikki R. Keddie, Roots of Revolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 143.

the participation of the masses in political affairs and provided a parliamentary method of government in 1906, were denied by both Pahlavi monarchs. Both Reza Shah, and his son Mohammad Reza Shah followed in the footsteps of the Qajar monarchs and ruled as dictators. They overlooked and underestimated the religious and cultural ties, attachments and orientations of the traditional classes and provided secular changes that satisfied only a very small section of the urban population. In their attempts to modernize Iran, both monarchs were against the modernization of the political institution of Iran. They wanted to import only certain elements of modernization from Europe and leave out the rest, especially the modern political doctrines, as Arani made it clear in his trial. The result, according to Barrington Moore resembled the current status of the Victorian houses with "modern electrical kitchens and insufficient bathrooms and leaky pipes hidden decorously behind newly plastered walls" which ended in the collapse of the makeshifts.<sup>25</sup> The Pahlavi monarchs suffered the same consequences. However, the processes and factors that were involved in the failure of Pahlavi monarchs, were much more complex and numerous. In the following chapters, first the culture of political opposition in Iran will be discussed, and then, the role and significance of one of these factors;

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<sup>25</sup>Barrington Moore, p. 438.

that of the role of religion, in the context of contributions and reinterpretations of Shi'ism by Ali Shari'ati will be examined.

## CHAPTER 3: THE DISCOURSE OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION

### Introduction

In his studies of political insurgencies and unrest, in the 1950's and 60's, S. P. Huntington came to the conclusion that rapid social change and rapid mobilization of new groups into politics along with slow development of political institutions were responsible for much instability and violence. It was also found that certain factors, such as: urbanization, the expansion of mass media, industrialization, spread of political consciousness, and social and economic changes, were all responsible for undermining the traditional sources of authority.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, the sources of such unrest and the culture of political opposition in Iran will be discussed. Since the political systems of civilized societies exhibit a great deal of diversity,<sup>2</sup> so do the culture and behavior of political oppositions. Unique to Persian society has been the role of religion, as well as that of religious leaders, in the discourse of political opposition.

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<sup>1</sup>S.P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven, Ct.:Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 3-5.

<sup>2</sup>Gino Germani, The Sociology of Modernization (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books Inc., 1981), p. 18.

### Political Modernization in Iran

Due to the absence of any political organizations during the Qajar period (1796-1925), at the turn of the century, the religious establishment was the only institution that challenged the policies and authority of the monarchs in Iran during the Qajar period. Even toward the middle of the 20th century when political parties had become prevalent, the religious establishment and leadership still acted as the strongest source of opposition to the secular government. R.W. Cottam identified three groups who were politically conscious and stood on the way of Qajar monarchs when granting concessions to foreigners. These groups were: the clerical, the merchant, and the intellectual.<sup>3</sup> Also unique to Persian society was the influence and contribution of men such as Seyyid Jamal ed-Din al-Afghani, Dr. Mosaddegh and Ayatollah Khomeini, who on their own initiatives and leadership laid the grounds for major changes. A new element in the political process of the 60's, was the appearance of underground groups that posed a serious threat to the Shah's regime. In short, the political development of Iran has

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<sup>3</sup>R.W. Cottam, Nationalism in Iran (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), p. 14.

witnessed both secular and religious intellectuals as leaders of reform and revolution.

The review of political modernization in Iran will not be complete unless the contributions of some literary figures are also studied. The writings of Al-e Ahmad and Behrangi, which were distributed in clandestine circles, served to be politically inspiring and enlightening for the masses. It was because of their literary works and critical analysis of the ills of Persian society that the literate population of Iran found themselves united in the source of such ills (The Shah's regime). These works made it possible for the masses to see the degree of concern and mutual bond that they shared with each other throughout the country.

My approach then, to the culture of political opposition and political modernization will focus on three perspectives. First, to determine the role of the religious leaders, the Ulama (the learned), two political events that were very important in the course of political modernization need to be discussed here. To reveal the role of the intelligentsia, I will discuss the contributions of two men from a considerable list of reformers and activists in the modern history of Iran. One was an activist and a reformer, and the other, a political leader. third, the contributions of the anti-government literary figures will be examined as to the nature of their writings and the influence that such literary works had on the masses in Iran.



The Uprisings of 1963 belong to the first section of this chapter where the role of the clericals in the political development of Iran is being examined. However, I will be discussing the details of this unrest after Dr. Mosaddegh in order to make a better chronological and sequential connection between the two. A full decade separated the Mosaddegh era (1953) and the 1963 uprisings. The two events, however supplemented each other to culminate in the 1979 Revolution.

#### **The Tobacco Concession of 1890**

The first mass political opposition in the modern history of Iran in which the Ulama displayed their political power was the "Tobacco Concession". The concession was given to a British company on March 8, 1890, providing the company with a monopoly on the production, sale, and export of all Persian tobacco products. This led to nationwide concern and anger among the people. Merchants and farmers were the most effected by this treaty.

A number of protests followed in the large cities. A "Fatwa," or legal opinion by the leading religious authority of the country, Ayatollah Mirza Hassan Shirazi, called for a boycott of the use and sale of tobacco. Before the Fatwa, the Ulama played a crucial role in agitating and educating the masses about the economic as well as the political consequences of such concessions.

It is said that the clergy (i.e. the Mujtahids and Mullas) are at the head of the movement, and that the word of command comes from the Mujtahid at Karbala."

Edward Browne quotes the following from Naser od-Din Shah's private physician, Dr. Feuvrier:

Suddenly, with perfect accord, says Dr. Feuvrier, all the tobacco merchants have closed their shops, all the Qalyans (water-pipes) have been put aside, and no one smokes any longer.....What discipline, what obedience, when it is a question of submission to the councils--or rather the orders of an influential Mulla, or of a Mujtahid of some celebrity!<sup>2</sup>

In response to the Ulama generated agitation and public unrest, the Qajar rulers reacted with determination to put off the opposition. In Shiraz, Hajj Seyyid Ali Akbar was ambushed by government agents and expelled to Basra, after he denounced the royal court and declared "Jahad" (holy war) on the British agents of the company. It was Seyyid Ali Akbar who encouraged Ayatollah Shirazi to intervene and to discourage the Shah from supporting the treaty. When his telegrams proved to be useless, the Ayatollah declared the Fatwa. For the first time, telegrams and pamphlets were used by the Ulama to mobilize the masses against a Qajar

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<sup>2</sup>Edward G. Browne, The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909 (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966), p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

ruler, Naser od-Din Shah (1848-1896). Finally, the Qajar king could not withstand the pressure from the religious authorities, merchants and their supporters and canceled the concession in its entirety in 1892, and only four years later became the victim of an assassination. Nevertheless, in the words of R.W. Cottam, "The course of Iranian history was from that time irrevocably altered."<sup>4</sup>

#### The Constitutional Revolution of 1906

At the turn of the century, a number of intellectuals and a number of the leading Ulama who had become frustrated by the apathy and tyranny of the Qajar rulers, demanded serious changes in the structure of the country's political establishment, thus, laying the groundwork for the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. A free press and a free election of representatives to a national parliament were among the major issues that were in the minds of the Constitutionalists. Edward Browne wrote:

When they (Persians) became convinced that their country was despised abroad, that their interests were betrayed for a vile price, and that their religion and their independent existence as a nation were alike threatened with destruction, then they began to demand a share in the government of their country.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Cottam, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup>Browne, p. xix.

Protest against the Tobacco Concession (1890-92) was indeed a prelude to Ulama involvement in the constitutional revolution only 16 years later. The constitutional revolution was in direct reaction to two developments in Persian society. One was the ever-increasing oppression of the court and tyrannic rule of the Qajars, accompanied by their neglect in adopting major reforms in Persian society as expected by the masses. The other factor was the encroachment and exploitation by foreigners. These two elements contributed to an alliance among the Ulama, liberal-minded intellectuals, and masses of the people especially, the merchants (Bazzaris)<sup>20</sup> who were discontented with the Qajar rule.

One of the most valuable documentaries on the Persian constitutional revolution in the Persian language was written by Ahmad Kasravi. According to him, the cornerstone of the constitutional movement was laid when two of the leading

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<sup>20</sup>The Bazaar used to be the commercial backbone of Persian towns and to a certain degree it still is. It is usually located at the center of the town with very high ceilings and is usually consisted of small sections, each holding a certain guild and profession. For instance, the shoemakers will have their shops in one section of the Bazaar, so will the jewelry shops. The merchants and the petty bourgeois of the Bazaar have had a reciprocal and fraternal relationship with the Ulama and have supported each other at the times of social and political crises. The tobacco concession, the Constitutional Revolution, the 1963 uprisings, and finally the 1979 Revolution, witnessed occasions of this alliance.

Ulama in Tehran joined forces in November, 1905. As Kasravi points out, the pro-constitutional movement had already begun before the turn of the century. However, the alliance of Seyyid Abdollah Behbehani and Seyyid Mohammad Tabataba'i gave the movement a fresh spirit and a strong leadership. Having been among the most prominent Ulama of the capital, they influenced the rest of the Ulama around the nation to offer them their support. It was Seyyid Behbehani who said "as long as Seyyid Tabataba'i is on my side, I do not need the support of anyone else."<sup>7</sup> The chain of other incidents like mistreatment of the merchants of Tehran by the governor of the city and the public lashing of a prominent and respected merchant, the wearing of Ulama garb by the Belgian financial adviser and the dissatisfaction of the merchants with foreign advisers, all helped the cause of the two Seyyids.

Among the many literary works that appeared during the closing years, as well as the beginning of the 20th century, there was a book written by one of the Ulama that left a considerable impact on the pro-Constitution masses. The influence of this book was even more so among the religious circles. This book was written by Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammad Husein Na'ieni, Hokumat Az Nazar-e Islam (Government from

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<sup>7</sup>Ahmad Kasravi, Tarikh-e Mashruteh-ye Iran (History of Persian Constitution) (Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications, 1972,), vol. 1, p. 49.

Islamic point of view). In this book, Among other issues, Ayatollah Na'ieni discussed two essential elements that would guarantee the integrity and honor of a nation as well as the preservation of the monarchy: First element was the maintenance of internal order and protecting the individual rights of the entire nation. The second element was to secure the nation from foreign intervention.<sup>10</sup> Both of these issues enjoyed top priority among the demands and concerns of the constitutionalists.

Edward Browne also revealed the following about the role of the Ulama in this Revolution:

One remarkable feature of this revolution here for it is surely worthy to be called a revolution is that the priesthood have found themselves on the side of progress and freedom. This, I should think is almost unexampled in the world's history.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Seyyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani**

Seyyid Jamal undertook theological studies, first under Aqa Seyyid Sadiq, a prominent Mujtahid in Tehran and then under Sheikh Murtaza Ansari, the leading Shi'i Mujtahid (the highest rank among the Ulama who were eligible to make judg-

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<sup>10</sup>Ayatollah Seikh Mohammad Hussein Na'ieni, Hokumat Az Nazar-e Islam (Government from Islamic Point of View) (Tehran: Sherkat-e Sahami-ye Enteshar, no date), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup>Browne, p. 123.

ments on legal and theological issues), of the time in 1852. He soon acquainted himself with the social, economic and political conditions of the world, especially those of Muslim countries. At an early age he began to travel to various countries in Africa, Europe and Asia. He gained recognition throughout the world as a Muslim reformer. According to Ayatollah Motahhari, he understood the social miseries of Muslim societies and also advocated solutions. He was also known as the founder of Islamic revivalism.<sup>12</sup>

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the exploitation of Muslim nations by European powers. Iran was being economically exploited by the British and Russian governments. The power and industrial development of the European nations on the one hand, and the decline of the Muslim societies on the other, brought Seyyid Jamal to the conclusion that there had to be a revival of Islamic norms and values. There had to be an ideological movement among the Muslims and that movement need not be contaminated by European ideologies. I believe that some historians have misjudged Seyyid's motives and influence on Muslim societies. Nikki Keddie for example described Seyyis Jamal as, "a man with a taste for quick and violent action. Assassinations, wars, intrigues, or revolts were means to

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<sup>12</sup>Morteza Motah'hari, Nehzat ha-ye Eslami dar Sad Saleh-ye Akhir (Islamic Movements in The Last One Hundred Years)(Tehran: Sadra Publications, no date), p. 14.

his ends."<sup>13</sup> Seyyid Jamal was thus criticized for lack of initiatives to promote an organized movement.<sup>14</sup>

By reviewing the worldwide activities and involvement of Seyyid Jamal, the validity of the above remarks can be challenged. In Iran, Seyyid Jamal took part in the Tobacco movement and he is believed to have written a letter to Seyyid Hassan Shirazi, the Marja'e Taqlid (a leading Mujtahid who was also a source of imitation) at that time, inspiring him to declare a Fatwa against the use of Tobacco in Iran.<sup>15</sup>

Seyyid Jamal was no doubt a brilliant agitator, and he publicly denounced Naser od-Din Shah. The Shah's assassin, Mirza Reza of Kerman, was one of Seyyid Jamal's disciples. Seyyid Jamal was constantly involved in giving lectures, writing articles, taking part in basts (sanctuary in shrines and mosques) and travelling to various countries. His mode of conduct was different in every society that he travelled to. He made numerous trips to Europe and resided in England and France, curious to find out the elements for economic and industrial advancement of European nations. In Islamic countries, internal dictatorship and colonization by

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<sup>13</sup>Nikki R. Keddie, An Islamic Response to Imperialism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 33.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>15</sup>Keddie, An Islamic Response to Imperialism.



foreigners were discovered to be the most important devastating factors by Seyyid Jamal. According to Ayatollah Mota'hari, Seyyid Jamal was determined to struggle against these two elements.<sup>14</sup> One of his most fruitful contributions was the publication of the newspaper, Al-Urwa al-Wuthqa, which was widely read in Muslim nations. The first issue of the newspaper, dated March, 13, 1884, explained Seyyid Jamal's motivation:

The paper would serve Easterners by explaining the causes of their decline and what must be done to regain strength. The paper will refute those who say that Muslims cannot advance toward civilization as long as they follow their own principles, and will show that they must, in fact, follow the principles of their ancestors in order to be strong.<sup>15</sup>

The same issue of the newspaper contained this article:

The banners of courage, national zeal, and patriotism must be raised in order to destroy the designs of the British and eject those who assist them, who are traitors, who can only be saved by repentance and a return to the patriotic path.<sup>16</sup>

Seyyid Jamal was expelled from Iran twice, in 1887 and 1891. The first time, the expulsion came as a result of Nasr ad-Din Shah's consultation with the Seyyid. It was in

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<sup>14</sup>Motah'hari, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup>Nikki R. Keddie, Sayyid Jamal ad Din "Al-Afghani (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 219.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

1886 that the Shah had invited the Seyyid to return to Iran to aid him in government affairs. Seyyid's radical ideas, and especially his xenophobia against the British and the Russians and his hatred against corrupt government administrators led to his isolation from the court and his subsequent expulsion from home. The second time, public speeches, distribution of pamphlets and open criticism of the royal palace led to his arrest and expulsion from Iran. It was to escape prosecution in the hands of Iranian authorities that he sometimes signed his writings with the pseudonym "Afghani" (from Afghanistan).<sup>17</sup>

Seyyid Jamal was an exceptional figure in his time; his commitment to awakening the masses and his ideological struggle against the foreign exploiters and native administrators are indicative of his nationalistic ambitions. He was also determined to revive what he believed to be the true Islam among the Muslims and unite all Muslims together (the pan-Islamic movement) to overcome their common enemy, colonialism. At the same time, he was also struggling against cultural imperialism and against those reformers who believed that Muslims had to give up their culture and tradition and adopt European culture in order to be able to advance. Edward Browne called him a "wandering scholar" with considerable political insight and knowledge of affairs

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

and "a sincere and passionate love of Islam", who literally made kings tremble on their thrones.<sup>20</sup> Browne also considered him the chief agent of the Egyptian Nationalist movement, as well as the inception of Persian Constitutional Movement.<sup>21</sup> Ali Shari'ati had great admiration for the Seyyid and identified Seyyid Jamal as the genuine founder of the movement against colonialism which was a threat to local and national cultures.<sup>22</sup>

#### Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh

At the turn of the twentieth century when Iran was undergoing the constitutional revolution, there came a number of men onto the social and political scene whose dedication and contributions will long be remembered. Men, like Modarres, Khiabani and Sattar Khan, contributed bright and proud pages of modern Persian history. It took many years of struggle for the Persians to get the Qajar Shahs to grant a constitution, but, it took them a very short time to destroy it. The constitution was granted in 1906. As early as 1908, Mohammad Ali Shah had begun his drive against the

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<sup>20</sup>Browne, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Eslem Shenasi (Tehran: Ershad Publications, 1972), p. 250.

Constitutionalists. Among those supporters of the constitution who were arrested and sent into exile was Dr. Mosaddegh. Following his return to Iran, he was appointed the minister of justice. He also held posts as minister of foreign affairs, minister of finance, and governor of Azerbaijan province.

In 1921, when Reza Khan and Seyyid Zia were collaborating on a coup against the last of the Qajar Shahs, Mosaddegh was governor of the Fars province. He expressed his despair about the coup in a speech to the fifth Majlis:

I am absolutely disappointed at the Qajar rulers because they have not served this nation so that we could defend them .... The Qajars were bad, however, who should replace them. Today, the candidate is the Vazir ol-Vozara Reza Khan. Suppose he retains the throne, how in the twentieth century, in a constitutional nation, can one man by himself hold the throne and the post of commander-in-chief of the army simultaneously?! Is not this a mere dictatorship?

At the conclusion of his speech, he declared:

If they cut off my head, if they cut me into pieces and abuse me, I will not vote for this type of government.<sup>22</sup>

It was in response to this speech that Reza Shah, like his predecessor, Mohammad Ali Shah, had Dr. Mosaddegh sent

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<sup>22</sup>Hosein Makki, Tarikh-e Bist Saleh-yeh Iran (The Twenty Year History of Iran) (Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications, 1978), vol. 3, pp. 442-450.

into internal exile to the South of the country. After spending some time there, Dr. Mosaddegh was allowed to move back to his home town, Ahmad Abad, where he stayed under house arrest. At the onset of World War II, Mosaddegh was still in Ahmad Abad.

During the war, in 1943, Dr. Mosaddegh was elected deputy from Tehran to the fourteenth Majlis (national assembly) from Tehran. From the beginning of his political career he was committed to three goals: the correction of the electoral laws, the maintenance of a neutral policy in foreign affairs, and struggle against corruption.

In 1949, prime minister Sa'ed and the royal palace were preparing an extension of the oil treaty between Iran and Britain. This was an extension of the 1933 treaty which would have enabled Britain to maintain control over all the Iranian economic and natural resources, including oil, until 1993.

There were only a few days left to the termination of the fifteenth Majlis and the supporters of the treaty were eager to ratify the extension before the next election took place. They had no assurance of finding the necessary number of candidates, supportive of the treaty for the next election. In the current Majlis, however, there was only a minority of members who were opposed to the extension. Hosein Makki was the first member of this minority group to speak against the

treaty the day it was announced in the Majlis. He had spent the whole previous night in the Majlis, to assure his turn as a speaker. He first read a letter which he had from Dr. Mosaddegh, after which disputes and chaos followed in the Majlis. As a result of the activities of this minority group, the treaty failed ratification, and its royalist supporters had no choice but to wait for the next Majlis.

On October 10th 1949, a historical meeting took place in Dr. Mosaddegh's house. Publishers of some of the leading newspapers, members of the minority group of the Majlis and a number of the intelligentsia, who all opposed the oil treaty were gathered. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the royalists' and government interference, bribery and blackmail that were taking place during the sixteenth Majlis election campaign. The government was now desperate to bring loyal candidates to the Majlis to assure ratification of the treaty. Dr. Mosaddegh proposed and the meeting accepted that a commission of seven members be elected to investigate the government's involvement in the election.<sup>24</sup>

The first step that this commission took was to take sanctuary (bast) in the royal palace (October, 14th, 1949),

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<sup>24</sup>Anonymous, Gozashted Cheraghe Rahe Aayandeh Ast (The Past is the Light of the Future) (Tehran: Jami Publications, 1976), p. 490. From this point on, this book will be identified by its abbreviated title, as : "Gozashteh Cheraghe...."

so that the issue would get nationwide attention. The decision was announced by Dr. Mosaddegh and the public were invited to take part in the sanctuary. During the course of this sanctuary, a committee of twenty participants headed by Dr. Mosaddegh were elected to discuss the election conspiracy. This committee was to be the nucleus of Dr. Mosaddegh's Jebhe-ye Melli (National Front).<sup>23</sup>

After the sanctuary, the committee of twenty held another historic meeting in Dr. Mosaddegh's house in which the decision to form a political party was reached and Dr. Mosaddegh was elected the first chairman of National Front. The program of the party was published later in which the following issues were announced to be the utmost concern and central to the party's ideology and commitment: Social justice, implementation of the constitutional laws, free elections and free expression of political opinion and the improvement of economic conditions.<sup>24</sup>

In May 1951, Dr. Mosaddegh was elected prime minister by the Majlis. This was his life-long expected opportunity, so that he could settle the oil disputes with the British in order to achieve one of his goals which was the nation-

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<sup>23</sup>Ali Jan-Zadeh, Mosaddegh (Tehran: Hamgam Publications, 1979), pp. 114-15.

<sup>24</sup>Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 251-253.

alization of the oil. In his struggle against the British owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Dr. Mosaddegh had the support and enthusiasm of two other factions as well as the massive support of the people around the country. The coalition of Mosaddegh's national front, the Tudeh Party (Iranian Communist Party) and the endorsement of the most politically active Ayatollah at the time, Ayatollah Kashani, created a triangular force of unity and nationalism which was too strong for either the British or the royal court to overcome.

In July 1952, premier Mosaddegh resigned over a dispute with the Shah about appointing the war minister (ministry of defense). Mosaddegh claimed that it was his constitutional right not only to appoint the minister of war, but stay in direct and constant communication with that minister. In an open letter announcing his resignation, Mosaddegh wrote:

In the course of recent events, I have come to the realization that I need a trustworthy war minister to continue my national mission. Since His Majesty has refused my request, I will resign and permit someone who enjoys royal confidence to form a new government and implement His Majesties policies. In the present situation, the struggle started by the Iranian people cannot be brought to a victorious conclusion.<sup>27</sup>

Till then, not only the Shah himself had appointed the minister of war, the entire army of the country had refused

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<sup>27</sup>Abrahamian, p. 271.



to take orders from various government agencies that were under the supervision of Dr. Mosaddegh's government.<sup>20</sup> Subsequently, Qavam was elected by the royalists with the support of the Shah to form a new cabinet. People closed down their stores and shops, first in the Bazaar, and then, the rest of the capital joined them as soon as the news of the resignation of Dr. Mosaddegh had become public. A strike was called by the National Front for July 21th. The Tudeh party also called on its supporters to take part in the demonstrations. Ayatollah Kashani denounced Qavam and called him "the enemy of religion, freedom, and national independence."<sup>21</sup>

The Shah had to call on the army and the police to face the strikes and demonstrations. It was at this point that Ayatollah Kashani issued a "fatva," (a religious opinion) that the armed forces should join the masses in support of Dr. Mosaddegh.<sup>20</sup> This "Fatva" was one of the decisive elements in dismissing the Qavam government and reinstating Dr. Mosaddegh, according to Zabih.<sup>21</sup> According to Jan-Zadeh, the first clash between the demonstrators and the police

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<sup>20</sup>Gozashteh....., p. 549.

<sup>21</sup>Abrahamian, p.271.

<sup>20</sup>Sepehr Zabih, The Mossadeqh Era (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1982), p. 59.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

occurred at seven o'clock in the morning on July, 21st as a youth was shot in the arm in the Bazaar of Tehran. Massive clashes and fighting followed between the government troops and supporters of Dr. Mosaddegh. Shah's appointed prime minister, Qavam, had ordered the troops to show no mercy in shooting the demonstrators. The slogans of the day were, "death to Qavam", and "death or Mosaddegh." Late, in the day, the army and police showed signs of being intimidated and overwhelmed by the demonstration and support for Mosaddegh. The officers declined to order the soldiers to continue shooting at the masses and desertion of the army and police followed.<sup>32</sup> At seven o'clock in the evening of the same day, the triumphant and jubilant crowd found its way to Mosaddegh's house where he made a speech as he was weeping for the martyred demonstrators in this day. He said: "the independence of Iran had vanished, but with your chivalry, you took it back."<sup>33</sup>

In the course of the following year Dr. Mosaddegh seemed to be in complete control. He had nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, taken away the fishery rights from the Soviets on the North, and had won the constitutional battle with the Shah, thus, reducing him to a ceremonial figure head. He had princess Ashraf, Shah's twin sister, who was

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<sup>32</sup>Jan- Zadeh, pp. 163-68.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

believed to have played a major role in appointment of Qavam to premiership,<sup>34</sup> deported from the country and had tolerated the publication of Tudeh papers, which referred to the court as "the center of corruption, treason, and espionage."<sup>35</sup>

In order to enact fundamental changes in Persian society, Dr. Mosaddegh requested emergency powers for six months from Majlis which were extended for another twelve months later. In this period, Mosaddegh introduced a land reform, a new tax bill, and pressed for reforms in the judicial, electoral, and educational branches of the government. The objection of the Senate was met by the resignation of the national front deputies from the Majlis which led to the dissolution of the seventeenth Majlis. Mosaddegh called for a national referendum in which he received a unanimous vote of confidence in July, 1953.

Even this referendum did not convince the Shah and his royalist supporters to give up their struggle and conspiracy against Mosaddegh. A group of pro-Shah army officers who were retired by Mosaddegh after the 21st of July uprisings, had formed a secret group. Their intention was to overthrow Dr. Mosaddegh's government, and kept close ties with the British secret service. The leader of this group was gen-

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<sup>34</sup>Jan-Zadeh, p. 157.

<sup>35</sup>Abrahamian, pp. 272-74.

eral Zahedi.<sup>36</sup> The first move of the Shah and his royalist supporters took place on August 16th, when colonel Nasiri, had the courage to appear before Mosaddegh's residence with a decree from the Shah declaring Zahedi as the new premier. The incident proved to be an embarrassing one as Nasiri was arrested. The next day, on August, 17th, the Shah fled the country after his abortive attempt to replace Dr. Mosaddegh.

Meanwhile, Kermit Roosevelt, a grand son of former U.S. president, Theodore Roosevelt was sent to Iran as the C.I.A.'s special envoy to plot a coup against Dr. Mosaddegh's popular government.<sup>37</sup> Mottahedeh writes:

On the morning of August 19 a crowd, bought in southern Tehran for only \$100,000 by Roosevelt's men--a crowd that included professional bazaar toughs, prostitutes, some religious leaders, and even some sincere secular royalists--marched toward the center of the city and attacked Mosaddegh's office .... Suddenly there were signs of pro-American and pro-Shah sentiment everywhere, and Kermit Roosevelt still had \$900,000 of undistributed funds in a safe. A few days later the Americans announced a grant of \$45 million to the Iranian government and promised further aid.<sup>38</sup>

Dr. Mosaddegh, the Persian constitution and the nation of Iran suffered a defeat, not in the hands of Kermit Roosevelt, not in the hands of the royal court, nor in the

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<sup>36</sup>Abrahamian, p. 278.

<sup>37</sup>Roy Mottahedeh, The Mantle of the Prophet (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 130.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

hands of the Iranian army. The coup became possible only because the unity of the triangle was broken, only because, unlike one year earlier, there did not come a "fatva" from the religious leaders. Dr. Mosaddegh had been left alone and on this day, August 19, 1953 he did not even appeal over the radio for the masses to fill the streets, as he always used to. In a matter of hours the entire course of the nation had been changed, which left majority of the people disillusioned.

The Shah was back and with him came his corrupt courtiers, his subservient puppet regime, and quarter of a century of suppression and terror.

### **The Uprisings of 1963**

Following the collapse of Dr. Mosaddegh's government, both the National Front and Tudeh parties were outlawed by the Pahlavi regime which now, with the support of the U.S. government, persecuted the members of both parties some of whom faced the firing squad. All political activities were banned by the regime and until March 30, 1961 when the great Ayatollah Boroujerdi passed away, there was no opposition to the Shah from religious leaders. Until then, Ayatollah Boroujerdi had been the "Marja'e Taghlid" or the "Model for imitation" since 1946, and had always kept himself isolated

from politics. The Pahlavi regime was preoccupied with strengthening its internal power after the Mosaddegh experience and used an iron fist. During this time any signs of opposition would be put down brutally by the government forces and the SAVAK. In one of these instances, the government troops assaulted the Feiziyyeh (The biggest theological center of the country) in the Holy city of Qom (located about 90 miles South of Tehran). Feiziyyeh is considered to be one of the leading Shi'ite institutions in the world for religious education. During the assault that took place on March 22, 1963, the police and government agents had arrested and beaten the Talabehs (students at the center) two of whom were killed in an ambush.<sup>37</sup>

A ceremony was to be held for the two martyred Talabehs at the fortieth day after they were killed, according to the Shi'ite tradition. The sermon was to be given by an Ayatollah who had previously confined himself to teaching the philosophy of Erfan (mysticism) and had never taken a public stand in a political issue in the presence of Ayatollah Boroujerdi. But, On April 3, 1963, Ayatollah Khomeini made the following declaration that shocked the entire nation, as well as the Pahlavi regime:

... it is because of our defense of Islam that we have been humiliated and brought to expect

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<sup>37</sup>Mottahedeh, p. 188.

imprisonment, torture, and execution. Let this tyrannical regime perform whatever inhuman deed it wishes—let it break the arms and legs of our young men, let it chase our wounded from the hospitals, let it threaten us with death and the violation of our honor, let it destroy the institutions of religious learning, let it expel the doves of this Islamic sanctuary from their nests!<sup>40</sup>

In his speech, the Ayatollah blamed this attack and other misdeeds of the government directly on the person of the Shah, whom he held responsible for an anti-Islamic policy. The above declaration brought to the Ayatollah overnight recognition, fame and popularity. Memories of the political leadership of Ayatollah Kashani were back again, and the Shi'ite nation of Iran again had a leader who did not isolate himself from the politics of the country.

The sermon of April, 3, marked the end of the reign of separation of religion and politics which was the desire and ideal of the Shah and his puppet administration, which had prevailed since the overthrow of Dr. Mosaddegh. It should be quite evident, that throughout the modern history of Persia, whenever, the religious authorities involved themselves in political affairs of the country, they have enjoyed the support of the masses against the institution of monarchy, (Tobacco Concession, Constitutional Revolution, the rise of Dr. Mosaddegh).

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<sup>40</sup> Imam Khomeini, Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini, Trans. and Annotated by Hamid Algar, (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 174.

In his next speech, that took place in the month of Muharram in Fayziyah, on June 3, the Ayatollah compared the Shah with the Umayyid caliph who had ordered the Ashura massacre of Imam Husein fourteen centuries earlier (Chapter 6). This criticism and attack on the Shah's regime was even more shocking and devastating to the Shah and eventually brought even more recognition and popularity for the Ayatollah. In Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini was the only religious figure who had called the regime of the Shah illegitimate and tyrannical; in his own words:

... a similar question occurs to me now. If the tyrannical regime of Iran simply wished to wage war on the Maraji, to oppose the Ulama, what business did it have tearing the Qur'an to shreds on the day it attacked Fayziya Madrasa? Indeed what business did it have with the Madrasa or with its students, like the eighteen year-old Seyyid who was killed? What had he done against the Shah, against the government, against the tyrannical regime? We come to the conclusion that this regime also has a more basic aim: they are fundamentally opposed to Islam itself and the existence of the religious class. They do not wish this institution to exist; they do not wish any of us to exist, the great and the small alike.<sup>41</sup>

In this speech he accused the government authorities of filling foreign banks with "the wealth that was produced by the toil" of the poverty stricken people of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini went on to claim that, upon the occupation of Iran by the Allied Forces during World War II, despite the shame

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 177.



and indignity that was forced upon the nation of Iran, they were happy to see the departure of Reza Shah from Iran.<sup>42</sup> Then he continued courageously to denounce the Shah and advise him:

Let me give you some advice, Mr. Shah! Dear Mr. Shah, I advise you to desist in this policy and acts like this. I don't want the people to offer up thanks if your masters should decide one day that you must leave. I don't want you to become like your father .... Shah, I don't wish the same happen to you; I don't want you to become like your father. Listen to my advice, listen to the Ulama of Islam. They desire the welfare of the nation, the welfare of the country.<sup>43</sup>

The Ayatollah called the Shah a "miserable wretch" at a time when nobody dared to refer to him even as the Shah, but he had to be called the "Shahanshah" (the king of kings), and of course the media always referred to him as "Shahanshah Aryamehr". Shahanshah meant, the king of kings, and Aryamehr, "the Sun of the Aryans", a title that according to Arjomand, the Shah gave himself imitating Louis XIV.<sup>44</sup>

Separation of religion and politics was the regime's ideal and in the process, of course, the Shah pretended to be religious and occasionally visited the holy shrines.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 178-79.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>44</sup>Said Amir Arjomand, The Turban for the Crown (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 118.

However, as the Ayatollah declared on the same day, the evidence proved otherwise:

... I hope to God that you did not have in mind the Ulama and the religious scholars when you said, "The reactionaries are like an impure animal," because if you did, it will be difficult for us to tolerate you much longer, and you will find yourself in a predicament. You won't be able to go on living; the nation will not allow you to continue this way. The religious scholars and Islam are Black Reaction!....<sup>45</sup>

Because of the black "turban" and "garb" of the Ulama, and the black "chador" that Muslim women wore to cover themselves from their head to toes, the Shah referred to the Ulama and the religious people as, "black Reactionaries." After threatening the Shah about his future which the Ayatollah predicted to be not long if the Shah continued his same policy regarding the religious leadership, he emphasized the fact that there was not going to be a separation of religion and state in Iran:

... I was informed today that a number of preachers and speakers in Tehran were taken to the offices of SAVAK and were threatened with punishment if they speak on three subjects. They were not to say anything bad about the Shah, not to attack Israel, and not to say that Islam is endangered. Otherwise, they can say what they like! But all of our problems and all our differences with the government comprise exactly these three! If we overlook these three subjects, we have no dispute with the government.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

Ayatollah Khomeini concluded his speech by accusing the Shah of the raid and killings at the Feiziye and expressed his anguish over the state of national affairs:

... there is much to be said, far more than you can imagine. Certain things are happening that endanger our country and our Islam. The things that are happening to this nation and those that are about to happen fill me with anxiety and sorrow. I feel anxiety and sorrow at the state of Iran, at the state of our ruined country, at the state of this cabinet, at the state of those running our government.<sup>47</sup>

The Ayatollah was arrested and taken to the capital. As news of the arrest became public, mass demonstrations broke out, which left thousands of protesters dead and injured by the army that had been called to suppress the riots. Major cities witnessed mass demonstrations in support of the Ayatollah that involved heavy loss of life, especially in Tehran. The army gained control after a few days of fighting. Ayatollah Khomeini was released from jail a few months later.

More than a year later, in the fall of 1964, the Ayatollah's prediction proved to have come true and he made the following speech after the Majlis passed a bill that offered diplomatic immunity to American military personnel employed in Iran:

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

I cannot express the sorrow I feel in my heart. My heart is constricted. Since the day I heard of the latest developments affecting Iran, I have barely slept; I am profoundly disturbed, and my heart is constricted. With sorrowful heart, I count the days until death shall come and deliver me. Iran no longer has any festival to celebrate; they have turned our festival into mourning. They have turned it into mourning and lit up the city; they have turned it into mourning and are dancing together with joy. They have sold us, they have sold our independence; but still they light up the city and dance. If I were in their place, I would forbid all these lights; I would give orders that black flags be raised over the bazaars and houses, that black awnings be hung! Our dignity has been trampled underfoot; the dignity of Iran has been destroyed. The dignity of the Iranian army has been trampled underfoot!.\*

Then, the Ayatollah revealed the new bill secretly ratified in the Majlis and began to explain it to the audience in Qom in detail:

... if some American's servant, some American's cook, assassinates your Marja in the middle of the bazaar, or runs over him, the Iranian police do not have the right to apprehend him! Iranian courts do not have the right to judge him! The dossier must be sent to America, so that our masters there can decide what is to be done!\*

The Ayatollah also revealed the reason for this bill, that it was a precondition for a \$200 million loan from the U.S. over a period of five years to be paid back to the U.S.

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\*Ibid., p. 181.

\*Ibid., pp. 181-82.

in ten years adding \$100 million of interest. Ayatollah Khomeini continued:

.... but in addition to this, Iran has sold itself to obtain these dollars. The government has sold our independence, reduced us to the level of a colony, and made the Muslim nation of Iran appear more backward than savages in the eyes of the world!<sup>50</sup>

The Ayatollah then stated that the Majlis that had ratified such a bill was not a parliament elected by the people of this nation and the deputies there have nothing to do with the Iranian people. On the separation of church and state, the Ayatollah quoted a statement from a currently used history textbook that it was to the benefit of the nation "for the influence of the religious leaders to be rooted out."<sup>51</sup> Then he made these comments:

...they have come to understand well that: if the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit this nation to be the slaves of Britain one day, and America the next. If the religious leaders have influence, they will strike this government in the mouth, they will strike this Majlis in the mouth and chase these deputies out of both its houses! If the religious leaders have influence, they will not permit some agent of America to carry out these scandalous deeds; they will throw him out of Iran.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 183-84.

The Ayatollah called the deputies traitors, called for their dismissal and condemned the bills passed by them as invalid. He invited the religious leaders to be unified and enlighten the masses. He criticized the Shah's White Revolution and wondered about the state of agrarian life in the country. He warned the nation about the danger of future deals or actions by the government which are to be kept secret from the rest of the nation, as the recent bill was supposed to be.

It was obvious that this sermon could not be tolerated by the regime which did not risk imprisoning the Ayatollah, thus, he faced exile in November, 1964. The damage, however, had been already suffered by the regime. The most significant outcome of the appearance and development of the Ayatollah as a religious leader was his criticizing the Shah's regime. This ended the quietist period that had prevailed under Ayatollah Broujerdi.

The texts of all the above sermons were distributed nationwide clandestinely and the uprisings of 1963 proved the enormous popularity that the Ayatollah enjoyed even among the presence of other Ayatollahs.

Another outcome of this one man struggle of Ayatollah Khomeini with the regime, was the renewed cooperation of

nationalists and Islamic opponents of the regime.<sup>83</sup> Noticeable also was, an increase in the amount of underground guerrilla warfare.

After his very first sermon on April 3, millions of Iranians were impressed, and thought they had found a capable replacement for the lost "Model," Ayatollah Broujerdi. For some Iranians, however, Ayatollah Khomeini was more than just a "model." He had become the source of inspiration and an ideal model of a charismatic and spiritual leader. Even though, his name never appeared in his writings and lectures, it was quite obvious that whenever Dr. Ali Shari'ati later made references to leadership of the Islamic community, all the characteristics which he described, fit only one person, and that was Ayatollah Khomeini.

The Ayatollah's challenge of the Shah and his mighty army was abortive, as had been the attempt of Dr. Mosaddegh ten years earlier. There was, however, a recurring lesson to be learned by supporters of both groups. As Mohsen Milani accurately noted: "More than a faction of this and a faction of that class was needed to seriously challenge the Shah as the nationalists had learned in 1953."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup>Nikki R. Keddie, Roots of Revolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 159.

<sup>84</sup>Mohsen M. Milani, The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), p. 98.

In order to bring all the factions together and wage a war against the Shah, there was a desperate need for a revolutionary ideology. An ideology with which the masses in Iran would and could identify. Dr. Ali Shari'ati, a sociologist and a graduate from Sorbonne was the man who discovered this crucial need and utilized his traditional Islamic education with his Western sociological training to lead the Iranian nation toward a unified front and a revolutionary ideology.

### **Revolutionary Literature**

Apart from important figures of the Ulama such as Seyyid Jamal and Ayatollah Khomeini and important political figures like Dr. Mosaddegh, one must also consider the writers who contributed to the political environment of modern Iran. There is a large number of such individuals who risked their lives and faced all the atrocities of SAVAK so that they would fulfill their mission to enlighten the masses about the ills of their society and of the ruling regime in Iran. Revolutionary literature and literary figures in the service of political and social reforms, was a trend that began late in the nineteenth century, according to Peter Chelkowski, who wrote:

The poets and writers, who were at the same time journalists, started to write for the masses of



the nation with the aim of educating and awakening people from their backwardness and submissiveness. This alliance between literary, social, and political expression has continued more or less until the present day.<sup>88</sup>

Such an alliance indeed prevailed under the repressive society of Mohammad Reza Shah, and there were many writers and poets who undertook the same mission as those literary figures during the Constitutional Revolution. Two such individuals who have received international recognition will be discussed here.

#### **Samad Behrangi (1939-1968)**

Samad was one of the most popular writers in the 1960's, who also opposed the Shah's modernization policy in Iran. In his writings, he displayed a deep resentment of American cultural influence in Iran. Samad was a teacher by profession and taught in the villages of Azerbaijan for eleven years. He had such a deep interest in books and their distribution among the public that he would spend all his spare money buying them to offer to the villagers, acting like a

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<sup>88</sup>Peter Chelkowski, "Society and Literature in Iran," in C. Max Kortepeter, ed., Modern Near East: Literature and Society (New York: Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University, 1971), pp. 19-34.

roving librarian.<sup>54</sup> His writing style was the folk tale, which was Samad's way to evade the regime's censorship. Whether inside or outside the classroom, his aim was to "elucidate, guide the young, and reform the education system."<sup>57</sup>

Two of his best books were: Kand-o-kav dar Masa'el-e Tarbiati-ye Iran (Investigation into the Educational Problems of Iran) and Mahi-yeh Siyah-e Kouchulu (The Little Black Fish). The latter won international prizes in Bologna and Bratislava in 1969.

As a social critic, Samad was preoccupied with foreign influence and domination of Persian culture. Unlike, Al-e Ahmad who was concerned with the Western Hemisphere's political and cultural domination of Iran, Samad's focus was only on the U.S.A.. As an educator, he was well aware of the content and nature of the textbooks that were being used in Persian educational system. Ninety percent of all the translated books in education, belonged to American educators who had written those books for their own environment and on the basis of their educational experience with their own pupils.<sup>58</sup> While a student at Teachers' Institute,

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<sup>54</sup>Brad Hanson, "The Westoxication of Iran," International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 15(1983), pp. 1-23.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 2

<sup>58</sup>Samad Behrangi, Investigation into Educational Problems of Iran (Samad Publications, no date), p. 5.

Samad wrote, that they had taught him about the proper height and weight of the kids and even the necessary volume of oxygen that was required in the classroom for each pupil in every hour. After he graduated from the institute, he was sent to a village where the major concern happened to be anything, but the volume of oxygen. There, the concern was the kerosene oil to keep the classes warm, finding medicine in case one was sick, lack of communication of the village with the outside world in case of a heavy snow. They had deceived me, wrote Samad, "that was how when I arrived at the village, it seemed like a nice dream suddenly changed into a nightmare."<sup>89</sup> By referring to a textbook that was used in the Teachers' Institute, where educators were warned about the "hearing and visual problems that pupils might have; Samad wrote that in comparison with his concerns in the village classroom, the warning of the American textbook was funny and ridiculous! His immediate concerns were: to make sure if the pupils had a piece of bread and cheese before coming to school, as had frequently happened where pupils would faint in the middle of the classroom as a result of hunger. So, how could he be concerned about the weight and height of the students or their being overweight, where he was not even sure if they had eaten enough to have enough strength to survive. Also of concern was, the writ-

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<sup>89</sup>Investigation into..... p. 9.

ing chalk and the fact that it contained so much sand that it would screech the blackboard, and on top of that our blackboard was so old and run down that we could call it "whiteboard".

In his analysis of the lives of Iranian teachers, Sammad Behrangi claimed that the major part of their culture consisted of the cinema, where they were shown foolish, superficial and deceptive films about love and romance, and adherence to a life of material comfort.<sup>40</sup>

As a political dissident, Samad was strongly opposed to the massive Americanization of Persian society and culture. This, he obviously blamed on the regime of the Shah. The Shah had already confirmed his position on this issue: "the potentialities of friendly and close relations between the people of Iran and the United States are immense. There is a deep and fundamental identity of national interests, which overshadows everything else...."<sup>41</sup> The educational system in Iran like the rest of the society, was so heavily influenced by American educators and advisers that the educational and cultural problems of Iranians themselves had been forgotten, or at best subordinated to Western issues of the day. By confronting and criticizing the regime and its

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-11.

<sup>41</sup>Amin Saikal, The rise and Fall of the Shah (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 57-58.

institutions, Samad was indeed challenging the Shah and his policies. His sudden death at the age of 29, under suspicious circumstances was the awaited destiny for him and for every intellectual dissident in the country.

In The Little Black Fish, there is a symbolic illustration of a black fish that is searching for knowledge in a journey through the sea. It was Behrangi's assertion that such knowledge should lead to action, and movement to correct society's ills. Such ills, throughout his stories, are the sufferings of the oppressed, the toilers of land and the workers, and Americanization of Persian culture.<sup>42</sup>

#### Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969)

Like Shari'ati, Jalal descended from a clerical family. After becoming active in the Tudeh Party in the 1940's, again like Shari'ati, Al-e Ahmad became an active disciple of Mosaddegh and the nationalists. He translated some French literature into Persian. Al-e Ahmad also taught in the teachers' academy in Tehran, something that Behrangi had done in Tabriz.

The focus of Al-e Ahmad's intellectual contribution was in the areas of cultural dependency and the educational system. He wrote Modir-e Madreseh (The School Principal) to

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

criticize the educational system; however, his best known work was Gharb-zadeqi (West struckness). Like Shari'ati, Al-e Ahmad was also critical of the traditional clergy and the kind of Islam that was being practiced in Iran by the public. Similarly both believed that, as a nation, Iranians were alienated in every aspect of their lives, from their food to their education.

After a pilgrimage to Mecca, he became a sincere Muslim and believed that Islam was the only force that could unify Iran.<sup>43</sup>

At present, 90 percent of the people in this country live by religious values and criteria .... Inevitably, they search in the sky for the good fortune they have not found in the present, just as they search in religion and the hereafter; and so much the better for them ....<sup>44</sup>

And in regard to the legitimacy of the government and its role in the society, Al-e Ahmad shared Shari'ati's views:

... because no ephemeral government has come through on the least of its promises and undertakings, and because oppression is everywhere, along with injustice, suffocation and discrimination ....<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Gharbzadeghi, trans. John Green and Ahmad Alizadeh, (Lexington, Ky.: Mazda Publishers, 1982), p. x.

<sup>44</sup>Mottahedeh, p. 300.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 301.

Al-e Ahmad held Dorehs (private gatherings) in his house in Tehran where intellectual dissidents got together, and it is believed that both Shari'ati and Behrangi attended such gatherings.<sup>44</sup> Al-e Ahmad and Behrangi, however, had a close and affectionate personal relationship, and Al-e Ahmad visited Samad in Tabriz in 1967, according to Hanson.

Statements such as the following, caused Gharbzadeqi to be banned and therefore distributed clandestinely: "Isn't it true, however, that we're now a puppet state of the West?";<sup>47</sup> "We're like a nation alienated from itself, in our clothing and our homes, our food and our literature, our publications, and, most dangerously of all, our education."<sup>48</sup> The book was actually published in 1962 and never went to open distribution until 1978. Nevertheless, the book was widely read following its publication in 1962. In a visit that Al-e Ahmad paid to Ayatollah Khomeini in Qom that year, the Ayatollah supposedly told Al-e Ahmad that he had read the book and admired it.<sup>49</sup> Interestingly enough, what may be called "The first phase of the 1979 revolution," (the June Uprisings of 1963), followed one year after the publication of Gharbzadeqi and was, incidently very popular

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<sup>44</sup>Hanson., p. 8.

<sup>47</sup>Gharbzadeqi, p. 49.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>49</sup>Mottahedeh, p. 303.

in Qom among the religious circles. Al-e Ahmad, was indeed the spokesman and spiritual godfather of the young and committed generation of Persian authors and intellectuals.<sup>70</sup> Like Shari'ati, Al-e Ahmad had urged the Shi'ite clergy to reconsider their traditional role as the spearhead of popular resistance to the injustices of the secular government.<sup>71</sup>

### Summary

In this chapter we have witnessed the beginning of political modernization in Iran. From the very early phases of this process, the ruling dynasties, both the Qajars and the Pahlavis were against such developments. The reluctance of the Shahs to allow for a democratic and just government, and participation of the people in the political affairs of their nation led to three crucial events in the modern history of Iran: the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, the rise of Dr. Mosaddegh to power in 1951 and the awakening of national sentiments at the time of the religio-political crisis of 1963 with Ayatollah Khomeini's preeminence among the spiritual leadership of the discontented masses. These three events, more than anything else, influenced and

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<sup>70</sup>Hanson., P. 8.

<sup>71</sup>Gharbzadegi, p. vii.



directed the process of political modernization and the culture of political opposition in Iran. Neither of the above insurgencies were able to overwhelm what seemed to the masses as oppressive regimes. Dr. Mosaddegh's short lived victory over the Shah was a genuine manifestation of the political and social structure of Persian society, in which secular forces alone without the support of the traditional and religious segments of the population, could not accomplish any major long-term transition.

Nevertheless, there were valuable lessons that were learned from each. Perhaps the most valuable lesson that these events taught the supporters of democracy and political freedom in Iran was that the unity and participation of the religious class with the intelligentsia and other secular political parties was essential, even the key to success. This was indeed the strategy that was adopted, and became successful in the overthrow of the Shah's regime in January of 1979. Al-e Ahmad had also attributed the political success of intellectuals to their alliance to religious authorities and the cooperation of the latter with them.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Mottahede, p. 301.

## CHAPTER 4: ALI Shari'ati (1933-1977)

### Introduction

Ali-e Ahmad was not the only person electrified by the 1963 uprisings;<sup>1</sup> millions of people and a considerable number of other intellectuals were strongly persuaded by the charisma of Ayatollah Khomeini and his criticism of the Shah and his unjust regime. One such intellectual was Ali Shari'ati who was deeply affected by the events that took place in Iran in 1953 and 1963. During the period of latter events Shari'ati was completing his doctoral degree in France and upon the completion of his studies, returned to his homeland, in 1965. It was only a few months ago, in the Winter of 1964, that the regime had forced the Ayatollah into exile in an attempt to bring an end to the social and political unrest that he had aroused.

While Ayatollah Khomeini was in exile, Shari'ati took advantage of the unique political and religious climate that the Ayatollah had created, and undertook an analysis of the questions that had been raised. Shari'ati did not possess the charisma that the Ayatollah had, but he did engage him-

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<sup>1</sup>Roy Mottahedeh, The Mantle of the Prophet (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 303.

self in something that proved to be very significant, which was the interpretation of the essence of Ayatollah Khomeini's approach to Islam and Shi'ism. Ayatollah Khomeini had severely shaken the political establishment by bringing religion out of the ten-year quiescent period, that had followed Ayatollah Kashani's activist role during the nationalization of oil (1951-53). What Ayatollah Khomeini did in 1963, was indeed, a Fatwa, (religious opinion), to the effect that Islam and Muslims cannot be denied participation in the political affairs of their country. It was then, up to Shari'ati to prepare the formula necessary to legitimize the participation of Persians in politics as a religious requirement.

In this chapter, the early life of Ali Shari'ati, his upbringing, parental influence, social and political forces in Iran and France, that influenced his life and career, will be discussed. It was a combination of all these factors that enabled Shari'ati to fill the gap that the Ayatollah had left behind.

### Early Life

In his studies of modernization, and the relationship between environment and the development of the individual, Gino Germani stressed the role of social structure and culture in the conditioning of the "ego-consciousness":

Ego-consciousness, the clear perception of oneself as a separate individual, completely different from all other selves in the world, and the sense of personal identity and uniqueness are the result of complex socio-cultural processes.<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that the culture and the social structure to which Shari'ati was exposed, had significant effects in shaping the "Ego-Consciousness" of Shari'ati. However, before studying the broader social structure under which Shari'ati grew to adulthood, it is necessary to consider Shari'ati's early life and the impact of his family.

Shari'ati was born on December 3, 1933, in the small town of Mazinan in Khorasan, on the northeastern frontier of Iran. His father, Mohammad Taghi, a militant Muslim, named him Ali because of his devotion and respect for the first Imam of the Shi'ites, Imam Ali, son-in-law of the prophet Mohammad.<sup>3</sup> Mohammad Taghi was himself a distinguished and highly respected individual who obviously had a tremendous impact on the young Shari'ati during his upbringing. Ali wrote in this regard:

My father was the first person to nourish the basic dimensions of my soul, someone who for the

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<sup>2</sup>Gino Germani, The Sociology of Modernization (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1981), p. 107.

<sup>3</sup>Abbas Aaram, Abar Mard (Tehran: Ata'ie Publication Foundation, no date), p. 9.

first time taught me to think as well as the art of being a human being....<sup>4</sup>

Ali was fortunate and proud to have come from a family who strongly stressed the value and importance of concepts such as human integrity and freedom; he continued: "After my mother stopped nursing me, it was my father who acquainted me with the concepts of freedom, honor, virtue, integrity of spirit, faith and independence".<sup>5</sup>

There seem to be two significant and distinct features in Ali Shari'ati's life and upbringing. First, Ali's father, who was responsible for directing Ali's interest and attention to reading and studying very early in life. Ali wrote about his father that:

First, he made me acquainted with his books. From my early childhood and my primary school years, I got to know and appreciate my father's books and stayed close to them. I grew up and nurtured in his library which was all his life and family.<sup>6</sup>

The unique occupation and religio-political activities of Ali's father will be discussed shortly. However, first, I should point out the second important feature of Ali's upbringing, and that was the inheritance of the tradition of

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<sup>4</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Kavir (Mashhad: Tous Publishing House, 1970), p. 88.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-89.

philosophy from his ancestors; whom he believed were all philosophers and scholars, and not just theologians. The most recognized of these scholars, was his great grand father, Akhund Hakim, who had a reputation in philosophy throughout the country, and was a disciple of Haji Mulla Hadi. The latter had learned philosophy from his uncle, Allameh Bahman Abadi who upon the request of Naser od-Din Shah, took charge of the philosophy department of the great Sepah-Salar school in Tehran (probably sometime during the reign of Naser od-Din Shah, 1848-1896). Perhaps it was based on his ancestral background that Ali claimed that acquiring and learning of philosophy did not become possible for him by reading and studying the subject alone, but "philosophy" was a subject that he could sense and discern in his genes by inheritance.<sup>7</sup> Ali emphasized this by quoting a friend of his who used to tell him that, "philosophy was apparent and recognizable in your gesture, body, attitude, words and silence."<sup>8</sup> Ali began to appreciate philosophy from early childhood. According to himself, before he could read and write, he was a philosopher, but a philosopher without a philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Ali's

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<sup>7</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Gofteh Goo-ha-ye Tanha-ie [Conversations in Solitude] (Tehran: Mona Publications, 1983), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6.

preoccupation with philosophy had made him a different child from the rest of his age group. Ali recalled the words of the elder members of the family about himself:

From the very beginning you were different from the rest of the children. You never used to play and had no playmates. Other children in the neighborhood used to look upon you as a grown up person....you liked solitude, silence and used to engage in talking to yourself, you were lazy in work, had no discipline and were extremely absent minded.<sup>10</sup>

Ali's father was not too pleased with his son's personal characteristics, especially his performance in school. According to him, Ali's teachers always complained about his performance in school, while he knew that Ali was spending most of his time, day and night reading books. The dilemma was that those books were anything but his textbooks which he ignored, whereas he would stay up until after mid-night reading books that he could not apprehend and understand, said his father. Indeed, he was indifferent to his school curriculum and environment, and always did his homework in the morning as he was getting dressed to go to school. Yet, there was no evidence of Ali's poor performance in school. On the contrary, he was a student of high character and ambition. He recalled his sixth grade teacher, Mr. Sabur Jannati, who used to teach Persian and refer to Ali as a

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

student who was "more literate than his own teachers and yet lazier than fellow pupils."<sup>11</sup>

Ali credited his father as responsible for teaching him more than moral values and the literary heritage of the family, which was deeply rooted in philosophy, literature and theology. He wrote about his father, with greatest respect that: "He presented to me many in a manner, simple and free, things in the earlier stages of my life which I should have learned later in my adulthood and with my own experience and struggles."<sup>12</sup>

Mohammad Taghi Shari'ati, also known as Ostad (Professor) Shari'ati was an exceptional figure in his own time. He dedicated his life to preaching what he considered to be the "True Islamic principles" and dispelling the negative influence of superstitious and reactionary elements that had found their way into the religion.

Shortly after Ali's birth, the family moved to Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan, with two objectives: to get the best possible education for their son, and to give the father a forum in which to exercise his social and religious ambitions. Mashhad was a relatively modern city that could offer a better quality of education for Ali and bring the father in closer contact with other intellectuals and

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>12</sup>Shari'ati, Kavir p. 89.



scholars. Both of these objectives were accomplished. Several years later, Around 1941, Mohammad Taghi founded "Kanun Nashr Haghayegh-e Eslami [The Society for the Publication of Islamic Facts]," which attracted a large number of youths and intellectuals, and provided them with guidance and information about Islam and the foundations of Shi'ism. This society was also active in publishing pamphlets and newsletters. Ali played an active role in this society, which provided him with ample opportunities to meet and socialize with dissident intellectuals of the city.

### Higher Education

Ali's entrance to high school marked an important discovery for him. This occurred by reading a sentence in a philosophy book in an afternoon while they had just finished lunch, and his father was reading a book as usual while playing with his lunch. One of the books laying around him was Maurice Maeterlinck's Reflections (thoughts) of a great mind. The book was translated into Persian and its first sentence read: "when we blow out a candle, where does its flame go?" Ali believed that it was this phrase that put his brain to work, and this was a new beginning for him. Up to this point, he used to read common books, but now, he began to read Maeterlinck and Anatole France and the development

of philosophy in Europe. My life became limited to thinking and thinking, philosophy and thinking possessed my mind and I became estranged from my surroundings and farther distant from life, wrote, Ali Shari'ati.<sup>13</sup> By reading philosophy, Ali eventually found his way in mysticism, and began collecting the works and sayings of great mystics such as Hallaj. This was how Ali passed his school days: While his peers were growing up with joy and in comfort, Ali was preoccupied with philosophical and mystical issues and questions. "My mind was being nurtured by philosophy and my heart was warm by mysticism, and even though, the elders were concerned about me and I myself had become acquainted with "disappointment" and "agony", (the former, was the result of philosophy and the latter, the gift of mysticism), but I was satiated and content...."<sup>14</sup> He took pride in the fact that he understood and recognized the world around himself even if he had to deny the joys and comfort of teenage years.

Ali did not clarify what, indeed, it was that he understood, but he made an immediate reference to the social and political upheaval that took place in the beginning of 1950's, which coincided with his attendance of Teachers' Institute of Mashhad. Without mentioning any names, he

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<sup>13</sup>Gofteh Goo-ha, pp. 7-8.

<sup>14</sup>Gofteh-Goo-ha, pp. 8-9.

referred to this period as "a sudden storm which disrupted his silence." There is no date on these writings, however, the extremely despondent tone of his writings indicate that they might very well have been written in prison: "Now, my life is confined to being silent for hours and witness the passing of moments."<sup>15</sup> It is not known whether or not there was any attempt in publishing these writings, I do, however, suspect that there was a great deal in stake, had there been any immediate plans for publishing them. Nevertheless, no names and direct references were made about Mosaddegh. There is no doubt that the movement left a significant and long lasting effect on Ali's life. He wrote:

....the story began, all the scuffles, arrests and uproars....and now, I entered a world of belief, faith, penmanship, epic, anxiety, freedom and love for the ideals of others.<sup>16</sup>

The phrase, "others" and their "ideals", could not be anyone other than Dr. Mosaddegh and his quest for liberalization of Iran and nationalization of the oil. Since, the incident was followed by turmoil and the subsequent overthrow of Mosaddegh, Ali wrote about it with contradictory sentiments: "Memories full of blood, disgrace, fear, chivalry, honesty, loyalty, scandal, sacrifice and martyrdoms." The depth of

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<sup>15</sup>Gofteh-Goocha, p. 190.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

the incident was compared to a "fire", by Ali, that the water of all the oceans of the world could not put it off.<sup>17</sup> Ali who obviously admired Mosaddegh, was an active member of the nationalization cause along with his father.

It was after the completion of his junior high school that Ali entered the Preliminary Institute of Mashhad in 1950 to become a teacher. This was a two-year training program which he completed and began to work as a teacher in the village of Ahmadabad in the vicinity of Mashhad. Also, upon the completion of his studies at the two year institute, he founded the "Islamic Society for Pupils and Students" in 1952. There, he conducted weekly sessions giving lectures on intellectual and social issues, including philosophy. This society was active for eight years, and some abstracts of his lectures were printed in Mashhad under the title "Maktab-e Vasete" (Median doctrine-school). In the following years, Maktab (doctrine) became one of the major ideological topics that Shari'ati developed. It was during his activities and involvement here, that his role as an activist and social leader was vividly felt.

The purpose and the function of the society which Shari'ati founded resembled that of the "Society for Publication of Islamic Facts", which his father had founded a decade earlier. He continued to teach and write articles in

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

the local journals until 1956, that he entered the university.

In the years of 1944 and 1945, a clandestine group had been formed in Tehran, by a group of ambitious young Muslims under the name of, "The Movement of the God Worshipping Socialists". The main ideological commitments and the doctrine of this group, which had a deep effect on Ali, were later published in the first issue of his "Maktab-e VaseteH:History of the Development of Philosophy", in the Summer of 1955. Shari'ati wrote that the program of the "Maktab-e VaseteH" of Islam was composed of three guidelines:

a. Among various schools of thought, such as "Materialism" and "Idealism", Islam has its own school of thought, which could be called, "Realism."

b. The social and economic policies of Islam are "scientific Socialism" which is based on monotheism and occupies the middle line between capitalism and communism.

c. Political policy of Islam would be neutral between the two opposing blocs of East and West, the former being led by Soviet Union and the latter by United States. The Islamic political policy will, thus, be oriented neither toward the West nor the East, but will be a third base, to include all the Islamic nations.<sup>12</sup> [It may be recalled that

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<sup>12</sup>Jan-Zadeh, p. 12.

this was one of the most popular slogans of the masses in the 1979 Revolution-Na Sharghi; Na Gharbi; Jumhuri-yeh Eslami; which would translate as: Neither eastern, nor western; but an Islamic Republic.]

In the same issue, concerning an "Islamic Revolution", Ali wrote:

There is no solution other than ourselves begin to do something and find aspiration only from God to revive our affluent civilization and Islamic principles which had been our savior. And to undertake a movement to change and convert all the aspects of our current society and allow the Qur'anic facts shed light on our lives and guide us to the path of truth and reality.<sup>17</sup>

It was also due to Ali's association and close ties with the members of the Movement of God Worshipping Socialists, that he was inspired to translate his first major work in 1956 or 1953, and name it, Abuzar: Khoda Parast-eh Sosyalist (Abuzar: God Worshipping Socialist). This book had been written by an Egyptian radical novelist, Abdul Hamid Jowdat al-Sahar. Abuzar, one of the first disciples of the Prophet, is depicted in this book as having left for the desert after the death of the Prophet. He spoke against the corruption that was spreading in the Muslim community by the early caliphs and admired Imam Ali's righteous and humble character, and his support of the oppressed. This book

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<sup>17</sup>Jan-Zadeh, p. 15.

obviously had tremendous influence on Shari'ati, who referring to Abuzar, claimed, "I have taken my notions of Islam, Sh'ism, idealism, grief, and anguish from him."<sup>80</sup> Shari'ati was so serious and desperate in following the life style and ideals of Abuzar that he himself had become recognized as the Abuzar of the time.

There were thus, two significant events that took place in the life of Shari'ati in his high school years. First, came his sudden interest and appreciation of philosophy and mysticism when he entered high school. Then, the end of his high school education coincided with the rise of Mosaddegh to power. The events of 1950's, it seems changed Ali's life completely from preoccupation with philosophy and mysticism to politics. He inherited Mosaddegh's patriotic zeal and passion for Iran and Persia's liberation from autocracy. He expressed his feelings in his memoirs to his generation of Iranians: "You know that I have never been concerned about myself, you and all know that, my life, and all my wants have been because of you, your destiny and freedom...you and all know of my vivid love and passion for you and your freedom and well being. You and all know of my admiration and believe in you. You and all know that I have sacrificed myself for you and will sacrifice myself because you are my

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<sup>80</sup>Abbas Aaram, p. 17.

faith, passion, hope and meaning of life and without you my life has no meaning."<sup>81</sup>

In 1956, Ali Shari'ati passed the entrance examination for the universities and was accepted to Mashhad university's Faculty of Letters. While pursuing his course of studies there for a Masters Degree in foreign languages, he laid the ground work for a literary society which, in reality, had mainly political aims. However, since there was no possibility of forming a political society under any pretext, poetry was only a mask so that this society could be formed.<sup>82</sup> Shari'ati's intention was obviously political, since out of the fifty to sixty people, who were members, none were poets. They all had gathered around Shari'ati for other reasons. In order to keep the political nature of the society anonymous, some literary work had to be produced to mislead the watchful eyes of the SAVAK, who were very suspicious of any society, especially those attended by university students. The minor literary work of this society was written by Shari'ati himself in modern style which was just beginning to be popular in Iran. In Mashhad, however, it was the first time literary circles saw such modern poetry, which they considered to be an irrational deviation from the traditional style and thus, not to be tolerated.

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<sup>81</sup>Gofteh-Gooha, pp. 147-48.

<sup>82</sup>Gofteh-Gooha..., pp. 90-91.



Criticism and refutations were directed at Shari'ati's work from all corners of the town, and he was accused of being an atheist and a Marxist, among other things. The following is one of the poems from that period:

... There is the shadow of horror all over,  
the smell of death  
... the color of despondence, silence!  
who is that who has lost the path on this secluded  
road?  
where has he come from? Where is he going to?  
... He questioned me,  
About the road and the journey,  
And I told him this road did not lead to Eden,  
But to the frightening desert ...<sup>23</sup>

Before graduating with honors from Mashhad University, Shari'ati married a classmate named Pouran Shariat Razavi. About his wife, he wrote nothing but admiration, as someone who provided the joy and pleasure of marital life and having children. Before her, I thought heaven existed in the other world, joy was found in science and the intellect, and sentiments in politics and ideology, and that this world had nothing except soil, wrote Shari'ati. Shari'ati continued, But, since she joined me, she brought with her this unknown world to me.<sup>24</sup> Having been one of the top students in his class, Shari'ati was awarded a government sponsored scholarship to the Sorbonne in France. However, past involvement

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<sup>23</sup>Gofteh-Goocha.... p. 88.

<sup>24</sup>Gofteh-Goocha, pp. 136-37.

in anti-regime activities delayed his departure temporarily. Somehow, the complications were resolved and he left for Europe in 1959.

While in Iran, and before his departure from the country, there are three different occasions that Ali was arrested by the SAVAK and was sentenced to prison terms. Once, it was in 1957, and another time was when the regime shut down the Ershad in 1972. There is a prison term that Ali spoke about it in the Gofteh Gooha. This arrest took place on the anniversary of Dr. Mosaddegh's gaining control of the government on February, 28, 1952. Shari'ati referred to this day as a holy day, a day of joy, victory, pride, and freedom. At the time of writing this portion of his memoirs, Shari'ati, referred to the event as having taken place 17 years ago.<sup>25</sup> This means that Shari'ati wrote this in 1969, when he was a speaker at Ershad. According to Shari'ati in Gofteh Gooha, Ali and a life long friend who went to school with him for twelve years, were both arrested. They were in prison for 17 days this time. Since this prison term took place in Mashhad, most likely its occurrence dated back to mid-fifties.

The other prison term which was much harsher, took place in 1957. Following the overthrow of Dr. Mosaddegh's government and the Shah's return to Iran, the suppression

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<sup>25</sup>Gofteh-Gooha, pp. 74-77.

and persecution of active members of all the political parties, especially the Tudeh and National Front began. These two were immediately outlawed by the regime. However, a secret organization was established later, under the leadership of prominent dissidents. The most important founding members of this organization were, Mohandes (engineer) Mehdi Bazargan (the first prime minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, after the 1979 Revolution), a popular and highly respected cleric, Ayatollah Taleghani and Dr. Sahabi. This organization was called, "Nehzat-e Moghavemat-e Melli" (The National Resistance Movement). A secret newsletter entitled "Rah-e Mosaddegh" (The Path of Mossadegh) kept the anti-Shah movement active in clandestine circles. In Mashhad, Shari'ati and his father were active members of the National Resistance Movement.

In this year (1957), the Shah's regime began another wave of attack and persecution on political dissidents. From Mashhad, fourteen members of the "National Resistance Movement" were arrested and transferred to Ghezel Ghal'eh prison in Tehran. Among them were Shari'ati and his father. He was the youngest to be arrested and suffered brutal beating and torture during his eight month incarceration at the infamous Ghezel Ghal'eh.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Jan-Zadeh, p. 18.

### Shari'ati at the Sorbonne

Shari'ati continued the same life style in Paris that he had in Mashhad, while pursuing his course of studies for a doctoral degree in sociology;<sup>27</sup> he maintained his participation in political activities, as well as being scholarly productive.

Before learning the French language adequately, he quit his language school and isolated himself in his room with Alexis Carrel's La Priere. Without any outside help, but by the use of dictionaries, and his admiration for Carrel, he translated the book into Persian. This was the way he began to adjust to his new environment, in number 15, rue Guthenberg in the 16th arrondissement of Paris.<sup>28</sup>

Some of his other literary works, produced during his stay in France were: a translation of The Wretched of The Earth by Franz Fanon; Five Scientific Conferences About Islam and The Social Psychology of Iran, and translations of Che Guevera's Guerrilla Warfare and Sartre's What is Poetry.

In the political sphere, he was one of the major contributors and activists in the formation of "The National

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<sup>27</sup>Abrahamian believes that Shari'ati's scholarship at the Sorbonne was for philology and not sociology as many tend to believe in Iran. Radical Islam-The Iranian Mojahedin (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1989), p. 107.

<sup>28</sup>Gofteh-Gooha, p. 56.

Front" in Europe. At the time Ali was leaving Iran, there was a nationwide attempt to organize and revive the National Front. By 1962, the organization had been formed in Iran clandestinely under the name of "The Second National Front." Then overseas activities began by the Iranian students to form the organization's overseas branch in Europe and the U.S.A.. After the first congress of the second National Front-European division, in the August of 1962 in Germany, Shari'ati was placed in charge of the publication of the newsletter of the organization under the name of "Iran-e Azad." He published the first issue in November, 15, 1962 and wrote numerous articles in this newsletter. Ali and his close friends agreed on the formation of a clandestine political organization. In this regard, Ali wrote a notice to his friends on February, 15, 1962, warning them that: "There is no doubt that it is only by means of or at least by the help of a revolutionary organization that the ruling establishment can be overthrown. It is important as to when and how this revolutionary task should begin?"<sup>29</sup> In September, 24, 1962, they declared the formation of the second political organization by the name of "Nehzat-e Azadi-ye Iran" (Liberation Movement of Iran), in Europe, after it was founded in Iran by Ayatollah Taleghani and Mohandes Bazagan, and a number of other National Front activists. Also, the

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<sup>29</sup>Jan-Zadeh, p. 24.

Student Confederation of Iranian students in the 1960's and 70's enjoyed enormous support from the Iranian students and intelligentsia who made their voice heard in their opposition and criticism of the Shah's regime. Shari'ati was also in charge of the organ of the Iranian Students Confederation, "Nameh-ye Pars" (Pars Letter). He also participated in the "Algerian Liberation Movement" (F.L.N.) and wrote articles in "Al-Mujahid", the official newspaper of that movement.<sup>30</sup> It was this involvement that sparked his betrayal to agents affiliated with the French police, who attacked Ali leaving him with broken bones resulting in a three week hospitalization. There was another incident in which Shari'ati was assaulted by the French police and had to be hospitalized and that was in the demonstrations protesting Lumumba's assassination.<sup>31</sup>

During Shari'ati's studies in France, the person who had the most influence on him, was the famous orientalist, Professor Louis Massignon, of whom he admiringly wrote:

More than all, what I learned and especially what I became was due to professor Louis Massignon who had gathered the West and the East in himself.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Jan-Zadeh, p. 20.

<sup>31</sup>Jan-Zadeh, p. 36.

<sup>32</sup>Gofteh-Goocha..., p. 2.

Shari'ati was so much overawed by his master (Massignon) that he confessed that when in his presence, he could see a delicate spirit in his moves, and with every move of his lips, Shari'ati used to tremble. He considered Massignon to possess the most elegant spirit of Europe.<sup>33</sup>

Louis Massignon, (1883-1962), better known as "Shaykh" or master teacher, spent more than a half century researching and writing on three distinguished personalities of early Islam; the Muslim scholar, martyr and mystic "Al-Hallaj" (857-922), Salman and Fatima, the Prophet's daughter and Imam Ali's wife. Herbert Mason, who translated Massignon's work on Hallaj into English, and who knew Massignon for five years and maintained a close friendship with him, wrote this about the Shaykh:

He attached himself to individuals, not to institutions; to prisoners and sinners; to people denied their place or deliberately left out of utopian plans; to the poor, the inarticulate, and those thirsting for justice.<sup>34</sup>

Shari'ati had the chance to collaborate with Massignon from 1960 to 1962, while the Shaykh was doing research on Fatima. Shari'ati considered these two years as two of the

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<sup>33</sup>Gofteh-Goocha, p. 33.

<sup>34</sup>Louis Massignon, The Passion of al-Hallaj, trans. Herbert Mason, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), Vol. 1, p. xxxvi.

proud and unforgettable years of his life.<sup>35</sup> Ali's attachment and close association to Massignon is reflected in one of his writings in the Gofteh-Goocha, and the manner in which he remembers his mentor: "all my people and my acquaintances, even my Massignon, my wife, and the society in which I live in...."<sup>36</sup>

Shari'ati also attended lectures given by Henri Corbin, also an orientalist, Raymond Aron and a number of French Marxist intellectuals such as Georges Politzer. He maintained close ties with Jean-Paul Sartre, Franz Fanon and Jacques Berque translating some of their works into Persian. The influence of one other person is evident in Shari'ati's training in France and he was Georges Gurvitch, the famous Marxist sociologist and one time associate of Lenin and Trotsky who escaped when Stalin came to power. Shari'ati attended Gurvitch's classes for five years and gained himself the reputation of Gurvitch's best student and an expert on his sociology.<sup>37</sup> The influence of Gurvitch, like that of Massignon is evident in Shari'ati's own assertions as he wrote that he bowed to Gurvitch and admired Massignon. To me, Gurvitch gave a sociological outlook which was a new dimension for me, and Professor Berque showed me religion

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<sup>35</sup>Shari'ati, Kavir, p. 79.

<sup>36</sup>Gofteh-Goocha, p. 145.

<sup>37</sup>Shari'ati, Kavir, pp. 83-84.



and how I could see this religion with a sociological perspective, wrote Shari'ati. This enabled me to make use of hundreds of thousands of information and knowledge that would have been useless for me.<sup>38</sup>

Unlike Marx who believed that history was the result of class struggle and economic interests, Gurvitch believed that "collective mentalities" of the "conscious classes" and factors such as, "religious beliefs, symbols, mores, customs, traditions, cultures, and popular perceptions of justice and injustice, good and evil, right and wrong", were responsible for making history.<sup>39</sup>

Abrahamian writes that while in France, Shari'ati followed a radical Catholic journal by the name of "Espirit" which he had learned about from Massignon. This journal had been founded by Emmanuel Mounier, a socially committed Catholic. Espirit supported left-wing movements and struggles of the third world countries for liberation in the 1960's. Radical Catholics and Marxists such as Lukacs, Jacques Berque and Henri Lefebvre were some of the writers of this journal.<sup>40</sup> Shari'ati wrote his doctoral degree in medieval Persian philology under Professor G. Lazard.

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>39</sup>Ervand Abrahamian, Radical Islam, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1989), p. 108.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

### **Dr. Ali Shari'ati--The Intellectual Dilemma**

In 1965, Shari'ati returned to Iran expecting the worst. Because of his political activities in Europe, there was no doubt about his arrest and imprisonment in Iran. SAVAK maintained an efficient system profiling almost all of the Iranian students studying abroad (Chapter 2). He was detained by SAVAK at the country's border, and was sent once again to the Ghezel Ghal'eh prison, where he was kept for six months before release due to pressure and criticism that was voiced in France against the regime. Shari'ati had arrived late in the Summer and Ayatollah Khomeini's last sermon, before exile, was in October of 1964. Shari'ati was in Ghezel Ghal'eh all this time and released only after the Ayatollah was expelled from Iran on November 4. The regime must have felt some degree of relief at this point, since they decided to be lenient toward dissidents like Shari'ati, once the major encumbrance, the Ayatollah, was out of the country. The regime also hoped that Shari'ati, as a

sociologist, would be willing to fill one of the gaps in the state's education system.

The inadequacy of this system was the cause of much tension in Iran during this period. Population growth and the push towards modernization had planted the desire for further education in the hearts of many young Iranians. Those who were either wealthy enough or desperate left Iran to pursue their education in abroad. Those who chose to remain in Iran, and were able to pass the entrance examinations of the universities, had no choice but to cope with the understaffed schools and state universities. Parents and students, noticing the great wealth of the nation, saw no reason for these inadequacies and protested, becoming one of the major sources of discontent in the Iranian society.

One of the regime's main problems was attracting educators, since due to the political repression of the regime, majority of the graduates from foreign universities never returned home. In attempting to encourage intellectuals and graduates to return home, they laid out the red carpet for all those who presented themselves. So, this policy was also a factor leading to Shari'ati's release from prison. They hoped that he would give up his dissension when he saw what his rewards would be if he cooperated. If he taught in the university and conformed to the regime's standards, he would be rewarded with all the material com-

forts of life. On this hope, they disregarded his previous actions and gave him another chance.

In Iran, keeping out of politics was the intellectuals' key to a life of comfort; conformity equalled affluence. Those who performed beyond this call and wrote in favor of the regime received even greater rewards. This was the prospect that the regime hoped would tempt Shari'ati. But It did not. Shari'ati, having learned virtues such as dignity and integrity from his father, had fallen into that category of intellectuals defined by Lewis Coser:

Intellectuals are gatekeepers of ideas and fountain-heads of ideologies, but, unlike medieval churchmen or modern political propagandists and zealots, they tend at the same time to cultivate a critical attitude; they tend to scrutinize the received ideas and assumptions of their times and milieu. They are those who "think otherwise," and disturbers of intellectual peace.<sup>41</sup>

The intellectual environment of Iran in 1965 was in some ways similar to that of France at the turn of the century, after the Dreyfus incident took place in 1894. Shari'ati and other non-conformist intellectuals in Iran could fall in the same category as the Dreyfusard intellectuals who defended justice and individual rights. The anti-Dreyfusards gave priority to the claims of the state for social order, just as the conformists in Iran displayed

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<sup>41</sup>Lewis A. Coser, Men of Ideas (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. x.

their loyalties to the regime.<sup>42</sup> These intellectuals either had no relationship with things political, as Coser put it <sup>43</sup>, or if they said anything it was in agreement and support of the regime. Some of their support was also the result of ignorance about the social and economic conditions of the country and thus, they were not aware of the oppressive environment of Iran; or if they were aware, did not want to jeopardize their privileged life styles, and face unpleasant consequences. In the words of Richard Hofstadter, these intellectuals had been incorporated and conformed; and thus, had ceased to be creative, critical and useful.<sup>44</sup>

Such a dilemma among the intellectuals could be the result of colonial policy. Throughout the world the colonial powers tried to manipulate the educational system of the subordinate nations in their own interests. British rule and policy in India would suffice this reality. In India, a number of intellectuals suffered such a fate after the imposition of an English educational system, by Thomas B. Macaulay, who became the president of "The Committee of Public Instruction", which was formed to promote native educa-

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<sup>42</sup>Coser, pp. 215-221.

<sup>43</sup>Coser, p. 136.

<sup>44</sup>Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1963), p. 393, as quoted by Coser, p. 359.

tion in India in 1823.<sup>45</sup> This individual believed that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. Thus, he introduced the English education system to India with the purpose of creating "a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect."<sup>46</sup> Macaulay believed that upon receiving English education, there will remain no Hindu "sincerely attached to his religion", and "there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence."<sup>47</sup>

This type of conforming intellectual was aptly described by Bipin Chandra Pal when he spoke of conformist Indian Magistrates who studied in British universities, then returned to India more like the British and more alien to their own people than the British themselves:

....In mind and manners he was as much an Englishman as any Englishman. It was no small sacrifice for him, because in this way he completely estranged himself from the society of his own people and became socially and morally a pariah among them....He was as much a stranger in his own native land as the European residents in the country.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (Norwalk, Ct.: Thetford Press, 1983), p. 86.

<sup>46</sup>Anderson, p. 86.

<sup>47</sup>Anderson, p. 87.

<sup>48</sup>Anderson, p. 88.

This kind of alienation was true about the Iranian conformist intellectuals, and Shari'ati resented them. He saw how they basked in a false pride and believed that they were set off from the rest of the society. In fact they were, they had been established as an elite class, but as such no longer performed the duty of an intellectual as seen by Coser, and in which Shari'ati concurred. Instead, they separated themselves from the people and never recognized the suppression and tyranny which existed in their nation. In Shari'ati's perspective, they were irresponsible intellectuals who were contentedly illiterate about the status quo and were only concerned with their materialistic and superficial lives. They identified themselves with western cultural values and were alien to their own native culture. This attitude and apathy made them a class of intellectuals very different in character and ideology from the socially and politically conscious intellectuals, like Shari'ati, Al-e Ahmad, Behrangi and Bazargan. Using the word, "Roshan-Fekr bi-Ta'ahhod" (Irresponsible intellectual), Shari'ati defined them as, "prejudiced imitator that has no prejudice and is illiterate without any integrity, personality, and honor, and who is arrogant and ignorant."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Gofteh-Goocha, pp. 357-58.

Within the non-conformist ranks, there were two avenues of expressing discontent: clandestine activity against the regime in the form of underground political groups, including guerrilla groups, that kept their identity hidden from the regime, which usually entailed full or partial withdrawal from society, or direct confrontation, which was certain to end in prison or assassinations in the hands of the SAVAK. These intellectuals belonged to the same camp that the Indonesian nationalist, Sukarno, identified himself with, in a speech in 1960:

....I belong to that group of people who are bound in spiritual longing by the romanticism of revolution. I am inspired by it. I am fascinated by it. I am crazed, I am obsessed by the romanticism of revolution....brothers and sisters, let us become logs to feed the flames of revolution.<sup>50</sup>

Either by direct confrontation or indirectly, the non-conformist Iranian intellectuals, as described by Sukarno, were obsessed and inspired for a revolution in Iran. Abrahamian gave a thorough illustration of the history and background of the individuals who took part in Persian Guerrilla movements. Of the 306 guerrillas who faced death in the hands of the government, 280 (91 percent) were members

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<sup>50</sup>Elie Kedourie, Nationalism in Asia and Africa (New York: New American Library, 1970), p. 110.



of the intelligentsia.<sup>51</sup> Abrahamian traced the rationale behind the formation and support for guerrilla warfare in Iran as it was expressed by a group of such activists:

The bloody massacres of 1963 were a major landmark in Iranian history. Until then, the opposition had tried to fight the regime with street protests, labor strikes, and underground networks. The 1963 bloodbath, however, exposed the bankruptcy of these methods. After 1963, militants-irrespective of their ideology had to ask themselves the question: "What is to be done?" The answer was clear: "guerrilla warfare."<sup>52</sup>

Shari'ati did not choose to join in any guerrilla movement. He was a teacher and had committed himself to spreading the seeds of revolution which he had found in Shi'ism. The necessarily clandestine nature of guerrilla warfare would confine him and limit his contact with the masses. Thus, Shari'ati chose to participate by speaking in the open, and he was prepared for the consequences. He was obviously aware of the value and force of those ideas that he was prepared to spread. And he proved to be right, as many among his audience joined guerrilla groups, like "Sazeman-e Mujahedeen-e Khalgh-e Iran", (The Organization of the Iranian Peoples' Freedom Fighters). It was almost common knowledge that there were actually close ties between

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<sup>51</sup>Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between two Revolutions (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 480.

<sup>52</sup>Abrahamian, p. 482.

Shari'ati and the Mujahedeen, and it is said that Shari'ati helped them with his prolific works.<sup>53</sup> The founders of the Mujahedeen were former members of the Liberation Movement. The Liberation Movement of Iran (Nehzat-e Azadi-ye Iran) was formed in early 1960's by Ayatollah Talleghani and Engineer Bazargan to strengthen the National Front and declared the members of the organization as "Muslims, Iranians, Constitutionalists and Mosaddeghists."<sup>54</sup> Mohammad Hanifnezhad, Sa'id Mohsen and Ali Asghar Badi-Zadegan, all graduates of Tehran university, were the founding members of the Mujahedeen in 1965 whose families held a private meeting with Shari'ati when the three were arrested by the regime and were sentenced to death (1972). It was suggested by the families of the three martyrs that the news of the death sentence of their sons become publicized and criticized at Ershad. Shari'ati's response was that this could be a legitimate excuse for the regime to shut down Ershad as they could claim a cooperation between this center and the members of the group who had been convicted as terrorists. Shari'ati then emphasized the fact that if Ershad stayed open, more and more individuals will find their way into groups such as the Mujahedeen. This, they all agreed upon. Ahmad Reza'ee, another founding member of the Mujahedeen and

<sup>53</sup>Abrahamian, p. 490.

<sup>54</sup>Abrahamian, p. 460.

the organization's first martyr, not only attended Shari'ati's lectures at Ershad, but he also participated in the private discussion sessions which were held after Shari'ati's lectures. Ershad had thus, become a center for the recruitment of the youth of the country. The center was used by Shari'ati to give ideological identity as well as a desire and aspiration to the youth of the country to be mobilized and struggle for freedom and justice.

When Shari'ati spoke about responsible intelligentsia and progressive religious leaders, he was referring to individuals such as Mohandes (engineer) Bazargan, and Ayatollah Taleghani. The former represented the secular anti-Shah activists and the latter came from the religious group, the Rohanis. These dissidents openly criticized the regime and faced the consequences. Engineer Bazargan, the first prime minister of the Islamic republic of Iran after the 1979 Revolution, an engineer and university professor, had convictions similar to Shari'ati; and like Shari'ati, he lectured, taught and was imprisoned. He was well versed in true Shi'ism, but he lacked the social genius of Shari'ati and was unable to make the same connections between the religion and its social implications. Therefore, the message and the doctrine that Shari'ati proposed were much more universal, mobilizing, radical and complete.

Another vitally important intellectual figure was the Ayatollah Taleghani, who was one of the most important,

respected, and popular Shi'ite clergymen of the time. The regime never dared to assassinate him because of his popularity among the people, so he spent most of his time either in jail or under house arrest. With his pro-Mossadegh reputation and as a dissident of the regime who preached openly against the Shah at every opportunity, Ayatollah Taleghani was watched closely and could speak against the regime, in Hedayat Mosque in Tehran, for only a short time before SAVAK would imprison him. Ayatollah Taleghani and engineer Bazargan were both founding members of the "National Resistance Movement", in which both Shari'ati and his father were also active.

Shari'ati, unlike Ayatollah Taleghani, presented his beliefs obliquely, disguised as sociological studies of different historical periods. He was therefore overlooked for a while by the SAVAK, who supposed that he was expounding on historical sociology or giving new interpretations of Islamic history. The parallels and rhetoric which Shari'ati used, reflecting the current circumstances and environment of Iran were, however, always understood by the people to whom he lectured. He was able to disguise his message and therefore, plant many more seeds of the revolution than most.

Had Shari'ati chosen to stay in France, he would not have faced the obstacles which existed in Iran. He also would

have received more of the credit that was due him on the basis of his scholarly contributions. He knew that this would happen, however, and accepted the consequences when he chose to join the outspoken revolutionaries. From the moment he left France, he saw educating Iranian people to the wrongs of the government as his mission. He returned to Mashhad, and began to teach the school pupils in a village near Mashhad. According to Jan-Zadeh, the regime was desperate to keep Shari'ati away from urban centers and especially from the universities. For this reason, he was denied the position that was available at the history department at Tehran University. First, he was told that he had to pass an exam and teach a course in the presence of a faculty member. This, he did, and after a two hour lecture, the students were so impressed by the content of his lecture that to the dismay of the faculty member at the lecture, they all surrounded Shari'ati for questions and discussions. When the administration learned about this incident, they notified Shari'ati that due to budgetary problems they could not hire him. Shari'ati responded that since he was already an employee of the education ministry in Mashhad, he was willing to be paid the same salary and teach at the university or be transferred to Tehran University where there was an opening. He was told that the salaries within the ministry offices were not transferable and neither

proposal could be accepted!<sup>55</sup> Later, in 1966, Mashhad University had an opening in the history department and the job was offered to Shari'ati reluctantly since this was indeed an embarrassing situation for the government to have a Sorbonne graduate teach in a village at a time that Persian universities were in desperate need of qualified individuals.

The government hoped that they could entice his support with their riches, but Shari'ati knew his mission when he arrived, and was not in the state of indecision that many were when they returned home from overseas, allowing the regime to convince them to their viewpoint by offering them prestigious posts and possibilities of luxurious life styles.

Eventually, the political content of Shari'ati's lectures, and his revolutionary rhetoric, could no longer be tolerated by the royalist administration of Mashhad university, and he was dismissed after only one year. But, this time he had already established himself among the intellectuals as a revolutionary ideologue, and was a familiar face in the revolutionary circles of the country.

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<sup>55</sup>Jan-Zadeh, pp. 40-43.

### Hoseiniyeh Ershad

In 1965, a modern Islamic center, the "Hoseiniyeh Ershad" (the center of Imam Hosein's devotees for right guidance), was built in the northern section of Tehran. Its founder was Mohammad Hodayun, a philanthropist and a supporter of the "monthly Religious Society" that used to be published in Qom (a religious center in the South of Tehran) and enjoyed enormous popularity in the country. Following the 1963 uprisings the government shut down its headquarters in 1963. This society was the most active organization publishing a monthly periodical on Islamic issues, as well as social issues governing Muslim societies.

A property of 4,000 square meters was purchased in Qulhak in the northern part of Tehran and opened its doors to Persians in 1967. It was named Hoseiniyeh because it was hoped and expected that the public attending this center, whether as speaker or listener, would follow in the footsteps of the martyr Imam Hosein, in his quest for social justice.<sup>54</sup>

Ayatollah Mutahhari, a prominent religious figure and an original member of the managing board, as well as co-founder of the center, wrote:

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<sup>54</sup>Shahrourgh Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), p. 144

In recent years our educated youth, after passing through a period of being astonished, even repulsed [by religion] are paying attention and concern for it that defies description... Husainiyeh Ershad, a new institution, in existence for less than three years, knows its task to be to answer, to the extent that it can, these needs [of youth today] and to introduce Islamic ideology [to them] such as it is. This institution deems it sufficient to unveil the beautiful face of the beloved martyr of Islam [Imam Husain] in order to transform the true seekers into restless lovers [of Shi'ism].<sup>57</sup>

Ershad was the center of the Iranian revolutionary movement until its shutdown in 1973. Thousands of people, mostly university and high school students, filled the center to listen to Shari'ati and other revolutionary leaders' lectures.

Shari'ati was by far the most prominent and influential. The lectures were recorded on tape and millions of copies were distributed around the country. This method was faster, more practical, and circumvented some of the dangers involved in publishing his opinions in written form.

It was common belief that the doors of Ershad could not stay open for long under the Shah's repressive regime. Every meeting and every lecture was vital and could be indeed, the very last one, since the SAVAK could unexpectedly seize the center, arrest the audience and speakers. Thus, Shari'ati selected the topics of his lec-

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<sup>57</sup>Akhavi, p. 144.



tures very carefully, as if there was no time for unnecessary materials to be discussed. The titles of some of his lectures were: "What is to be done", "Martyrdom", "Whence shall we begin", "Waiting for the religion of protest", and "Methodology for understanding Islam."

One of Shari'ati's lectures was The Shi'ite Revolution of Sar'bedaran. This was an example of how he spoke in parallels using a particular historical incident to criticize the social and political conditions of the day in Iran. In this lecture, Shari'ati intended to discuss the attitudes of the clergy to the oppressive conditions of the country. In order to safeguard himself, when using terms such as "tyranny" and "oppression", he presented his theme by depicting the thirteenth century society of Iran, whereas he was actually referring to the current conditions of the country.

He described the Mongolian persecution of the Persians during the first half of the thirteenth century. The countryside was divided into regions, each ruled by a Mongol, who was generally a tyrant. The abuse of the masses was never ending. Shari'ati's next scenario was to investigate as to why there were not any uprisings against the oppressors. This was the question in the mind of an individual who began to search the country for an answer. This individual, the character of the story, whom Shari'ati

referred to as the "Va'ez" (Preacher), was determined to seek justice against the Mongol oppressors.

First, the role and position of the clergy and Ulama had to be presented in those social and political conditions, after all, they are the guardians of the people against the oppression of the rulers in Shari'ati's approach to Shi'ism. There was one group of the Muslim clergy who had entered the service of the Mongol leaders and were calling for the peoples' obedience to the rulers. They had accepted the invading Mongols as the country's legitimate rulers and hesitated to stand up for the real culture, religion, and morals of the country and people.

Shari'ati then, spoke about another group of clergy during this period who were not concerned about the social and political plight of the people. These, he said, sought a life of seclusion in asceticism and mysticism. Shari'ati said that although they were not direct supporters of the Mongol rulers, like the first group of clergy, they had paved the road nonetheless for the continuation of this vicious exploitation by abandoning their people and leaving them helpless.

In his search for truth and an answer for the plight of the people, the first stop of the Preacher's journey was to see the spiritual leader and master of asceticism. He was disenchanted when he found out that these ascetics had

chosen to remain silent before oppression. The Preacher was furious to learn that they could hear the cries of the slaves and the hangmen, the misery of the hungry, and still be so selfish as to seek personal salvation in asceticism and mysticism rather than waging a war against oppression for the salvation of their fellow men.

The Preacher then studied Sufism, a form of mysticism emphasizing the purification of the spirit. He found it, like asceticism, to be an attempt to escape from the brutal reality of the period. He found that the Sufis had kind hearts and delicate spirits, but somehow ignored the oppression of the masses and the bloodbath that the Mongols had caused. The Preacher could not understand how a Sufi could live a peaceful life while the people suffered mercilessly.

After leaving the ascetics and mystics in disdain, he went to the leading theologian to find out if his mastery of theological sciences could aid him to save the people from their miseries under the Mongol rule. The Preacher then realized that even though theological training helped to answer thousands of religious questions, it did not concern itself with the social and political conditions of the people and their inhumane treatment in the hands of the Mongol rulers.

The Preacher realized that he had not come close to discovery of truth and the answer for the salvation of the

people, so far, in his journey. He resented the status quo and found no hope in the above mentioned schools of faith. He finally came to the conclusion that the answer and solution for salvation was in The faith of protest and martyrdom-Shi'ism.

As a responsible and committed Muslim, he set out, for the town of Sabzevar, dressed as a dervish and began preaching against the elements responsible for the illiteracy and oppression of the masses. The local clergy continued their daily sermons and kept the masses preoccupied with superficial issues and when they heard about the new Preacher in town and his protest and criticism of the Mongols, they began to accuse him of concern over worldly issues. It is important to point out that this was indeed the case in Iran under the Shah's rule where a considerable number of clergy kept out of politics and believed that their religious and moral stature was beyond these worldly issues.

The rumors of the Preacher, who spoke against the Mongol rulers and exhorted the masses to protest against the oppressors, spread all over town, and finally, one day his followers found him assassinated in the mosque at dawn as they went for morning prayers. Now, the movement was widely recognized and the Preacher's followers continued his cause clandestinely. Suddenly, Sabzevar became the center of a Shi'ite revolution; first in the northeastern parts of the

country and then the rest of the country joined a protest against the foreign elements of injustice and oppression. It was the first time in history that a revolution was based on Alavid Shi'ism. "Shi'ism as recognized by Shari'ati to be in line with political and moral stands of Imam Ali" (chapter 6) against foreign hegemony and domestic exploitation.<sup>59</sup>

By applying a sociological and political analysis of a religious doctrine, Shi'ism, Shari'ati's objective was to educate and convince his audience that "Shi'ism" was definitely a religion of protest, protest against social injustice. The Shah's regime being an unjust government, Muslims had a religious obligation to mobilize and revolt against him and his establishment.

Shari'ati was able to lay the ideological foundation of a revolution in Ershad during the five year period of his lectures. It was very unusual that the SAVAK allowed him to continue for so long. There were a few possible explanations. The first was that Shari'ati, as an educator, was a needed commodity, and the regime seemed to be hoping that they could convince him to give them his support. His backing would have been a crucial blow to the revolutionary forces. Once he began his lectures, the regime saw a division develop in the Islamic community. The uneducated reactionary clergy were unable to understand Shari'ati's lec-

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<sup>59</sup>Aaram, pp. 63-68.

tures and his radical (yet orthodox) interpretations of Islam. The regime was both thrilled and relieved to see the reactionary and traditional clergy on one side and Shari'ati on the other side, condemning each other. The regime thought the criticism of Shari'ati within the religious circles was bound to have much more weight than any that came from outside, so they let him continue.

Another possibility is that, like the uneducated clergy, the SAVAK were themselves unable to understand the real content of Shari'ati's message. His message was disguised in allegories; he was not preaching only religion, nor merely sociology, nor politics, but combined them all in a setting that the SAVAK could not immediately comprehend. The genius of Shari'ati's message was that while it was a clear call to the Iranian people, that they must be responsible Shi'ites, stand against corruption, protest against injustice and support the opposition, at the same time, it was disguised from the regime.

Ultimately, Shari'ati's popularity alarmed the regime, let alone the content of his lectures. The autocratic regimes in Iran, always resented popular figures. Even a world class wrestling champion, Gholam-Reza Takhti, who had become very popular among the people in the 1960's, suffered death at the hands of the SAVAK (1967). In 1972, the SAVAK closed down the center, Hoseiniyeh Ershad. Since they could

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not locate Shari'ati, they arrested his father and banned all his books. Shari'ati turned himself in to save and release his father from jail. He was in prison until 1975, and was released after a petition on his behalf was documented by the Algerian government. Shari'ati remained under house arrest in his home town for another two years until May 1977, when he was granted a permit to leave the country. There was a precondition set by the SAVAK, however, his family had to stay in Iran. He left for London and one month later, was found dead in his room under mysterious circumstances (June, 19, 1977), in which SAVAK agents operating overseas were the prime suspects.<sup>54</sup> Death (martyrdom) of such individuals were automatically blamed on the SAVAK by the people in Iran, whereas abroad, questions could be raised! The reputation of the SAVAK and the brutality of the regime over the years had formed the minds of the people; and medical reports (Shari'ati) and rumors of suicide (Takhti) had no validity for Iranians.

### Summary

In the preceding chapter, various factors that were responsible for Shari'ati's upbringing and the specific direction of his life style, ideology, personality, and

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<sup>54</sup>Akhavi, p. 145.

above all, his dedication to construction of a revolutionary ideology, were discussed. It was pointed out that his family, especially his father had a significant effect not just on Shari'ati's approach to Shi'ism, but his character, personality and psychological build up as a whole, and his dedication for learning, be it literature or philosophy. Following Shari'ati's early years and his paternal influence, there were two major developments in Iran that left a very deep effect on Shari'ati as well as on most of the Iranians. The first of these developments was the rise of Dr. Mosaddegh to power. Indeed, the impact of the Mosaddeghist movement and his quest for nationalization of the oil against the British, was universal especially deep in third world countries. The second event took place a decade later, in 1963, as the country witnessed another significant development in its surge against the Shah's oppressive rule as Ayatollah Khomeini led the religious institution of the country out of its quietist shell. The charismatic insurgence of the Ayatollah against the Shah left a significant impact on the Persian society. Not only there was a new outlook on religion in general and Shi'ism in particular, but there was a wave of new movements and developments in the form of guerrilla groups and underground organizations (Mojahedin-founded in 1964) against the Pahlavi regime. Shari'ati's political and revolutionary interpreta-



tions of Shi'ism came at the right time as the Ayatollah had already prepared the stage for him. There was yet another significant factor which helped Shari'ati to become a revolutionary ideologue and that was his European education and training in sociology. He not only acquired his knowledge of sociology from the Sorbonne under Gurvitch, but he was fortunate to have met and stay in close contact with a number of people who influenced his outlook and ideology. The most important of these people was his master Louis Massignon who impressed Shari'ati more than anyone else and other radical intellectuals like Fanon and Sartre. It was the combined forces of these factors (paternal influence, political atmosphere of the Mosaddegh episode, his training in sociology, Ayatollah Khomeini's insurgence in the 1963 uprisings against the Shah), that led Shari'ati to a non-conformist attitude toward the regime. Like the Ayatollah, and in the footsteps of Abuzar and the "Preacher" from Sabzevar, he sacrificed his life in mobilizing the masses against an unjust government. His contributions were not like the Ayatollah by use of his charisma, but by way of a political interpretation and presentation of Shi'ism with sociological formulas that he had acquired from the Sorbonne. In the following chapters, Shari'ati's approach and interpretations of Shi'ism will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 5: SHARI'ATI'S THOUGHTS ON ISLAM

### Introduction

It was almost a century ago that Max Weber wrote that there was a link between the development of modern capitalism and the Protestant Ethic of the Reformation. Across the border, a contemporary of Max Weber, Emile Durkheim had undertaken the study of "Sociology Of Religion" stressing that religious phenomenon was a communal and not an individual issue. At one point Durkheim had argued that religion was "the cement of society-the means by which men had been led to turn from the every day concerns in which they were variously enmeshed to a common devotion to sacred things."<sup>1</sup> Half a century later, Ali Shari'ati studied sociology and religion at the same university where Durkheim had taught at one time. Socio-political circumstances of a different environment preoccupied Shari'ati, however, and led him to the conclusion, that on the contrary, religion was a means, by force of which men should be led to every day concerns. "Faith gives the individual his determination to struggle and the group its cement"; was Shari'ati's

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis A. Coser, Masters of Sociological Thought (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977), P. 137.

approach to religion.<sup>12</sup> The fact that Weber and Durkheim used sociological concepts and discipline to study religion, was indeed a crucial lesson that Shari'ati learned while he was at the Sorbonne, i.e. that religious phenomenon could be studied, explained and probably manipulated in a sociological context. Weber and Shari'ati both applied sociological concepts to study Christianity and Islam respectively. While the former was preoccupied with the economic relationship between the Protestant Ethic and the advent of "capitalism", the latter was preoccupied with the political relationship between Shi'ism and the development of a "protest movement." In this chapter, the sociological concepts and methodology that Shari'ati used and applied to Islamic principles will be discussed. By doing so, not only did Shari'ati develop and reinterpret Islamic concepts such as "Tauhid" and "Maktab", but he also revitalized and politicized the entire religion of Islam in a Shi'ite perspective.

#### Islam: A Misconceived Religion

Shari'ati's writings on Islam focused on two major issues. The first concerned the religion of Islam. The

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<sup>12</sup>Nikki R. Keddie, Roots of Revolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 181.

second issue was the position and mission of the Ulama (the learned, scholars, preachers and educators of Islam) and religious leaders. He believed that the position of both had to be reconsidered, and his primary argument for such a claim was that, at its early stages of development, Islam suffered bad nutrition and as a result, what we are witnessing today is a biased Islam that has suffered poisoning. Shari'ati's speculation was based on the close intellectual contacts with the Persian and Byzantine cultures and the diversity and background of Muslim scholars which upset the intellectual balance of Islam and eventually led to the development of other intellectual schools within Islam such as Sufism and asceticism.<sup>3</sup> The second assertion that Shari'ati made was that the Holy book, the Qur'an, had been misplaced from the city to the cemetery. What Shari'ati implied by this statement was that the Holy Book which contained the blueprints for a perfect society had been ignored and overlooked, and its verses were only being read for the dead in the cemeteries as prayers.<sup>4</sup> Shari'ati blamed the traditional and reactionary clergymen for such a tragic derivation that had occurred in Muslim societies for a long

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<sup>3</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Khod-Sazi-ye Enghelabi [Revolutionary Self-Construction], Collected Works, no. 2, (Tehran: Huseiniyeh Ershad, no date), p. 28

<sup>4</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Shi'eh [Shi'ite] (Tehran: Huseiniyeh Ershad, n. d.), p. 61.

time. This criticism of the clergymen "Ulama" (the learned men of the religion) became ground for deep hostility between Shari'ati and the traditional or reactionary Ulama. From the Ulama's perspective, it was irrational for some one who lacked any theological training, such as Shari'ati, to criticize the Ulama, who considered themselves expert in the field. However, Shari'ati believed otherwise:

....It is possible for some Islamic Ulama not to be Islamologists and experts on Islam, and on the contrary, there are those who understand, appreciate Islam and are Islamologists, but are not members of the Ulama class.<sup>5</sup>

Shari'ati's earlier Islamic training under his father and his later association with Massignon (chapter 4) sufficed for him to reach this conclusion. Shari'ati's position was that there was a difference between just knowing about something on one hand, and understanding and recognizing, (to have an intuition) on the other hand. Thus, there were Islamic clergymen who were not experts on Islam and did not understand Islam, and yet there were those who understood Islam, but were not among the clergymen. Learning can be acquired in two ways according to Shari'ati. One method is by studying and building an expertise in a subject. The other method is by way of intuition, sensing and recognizing

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<sup>5</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Eslam-Shenasii[Islamology] (Tehran: Hoseiniyeh Ershad, n.d.), p. 6.

the spirit of a certain field. Therefore, Shari'ati believed that Islamic ideology cannot and should not be learned as a collection of technical information, but must be learned as a system of belief, opinion, as well as an historical and humanitarian movement.<sup>6</sup> By bringing the Qur'an back to the city, Shari'ati was indeed assigning the same role for religion as Durkheim had presumed: "a vital mechanism of integration of human beings and as a realm of unifying symbols."<sup>7</sup>

Interpreting the role and function of the religion in a sociological context in line with Durkheim and Weber was one major source of separation and hostility between Shari'ati and the traditional Ulama. In the same way that Weber had discovered Protestantism to be the major force responsible for social change in Western society, Shari'ati had reached the same conclusion about Islam and believed that Islam could function the same way, but in a somewhat different context. The difference was seen in the dissimilarity of the two cultures and the socio-political factors of the respective environments, as well as the gap of almost four centuries. Iran in the twentieth century was facing dis-

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<sup>6</sup>Shari'ati, Eslam-Shenasi, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup>Robert A. Nisbet, The Sociology of Emile Durkheim (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 165.

tinct issues of her own that were different from France or Germany in the sixteenth or eighteenth century. The important element was that Shari'ati, with his sociological outlook, had discovered the potential of religion as a force in society, something that the traditional Ulama were not as aware.

Weber was preoccupied with the "economic contributions of Protestant ethics" and Durkheim with contributions of religion "to a sense of membership in human society"; the former was predominately historically oriented, and the latter was analytically oriented. But, Shari'ati's preoccupation was with the socio-political conditions of the society, what Weber referred to as the "the ethic of physical pleaseure" side of Islam opposed to "the ethic of world rejection".<sup>2</sup> Based on his studies of Islam, under his father in Iran, and under Massignon abroad, and also his training as a sociologist, he determined his goals, commitments and major responsibilities as a Roshan-Fekr (chapter 6) to be:

1. To revitalize Islam
2. To make Islam an ideology rather than a collection of historical events and technical instructions
3. To develop a world view based on Islamic ideology
4. To consider a school of thought, called "Maktab"
5. To suggest outlines for an "ideal society" which he called "Ummat"

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<sup>2</sup>Bryan S. Turner, Weber and Islam (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 138.

### Reinterpretation and Revitalization of Islam

In his attempt to revitalize Islam, Shari'ati resembled Seyyid Jamal ed-Din al-Afghani. Both men were aware that Islam, as an ideology, could withstand the imperialist and colonial forces and act as a social and political frame of reference in the modern world. Shari'ati, however, was much more advanced than Seyyid Jamal in that he was trained and, thus, capable of reinterpreting Islam in an ideological and sociological framework. More than an ideologue, in the words of Shahrough Akhavi, Shari'ati was a "social engineer" who sought to:

apply broad concepts to Islamic institutions and processes in the manner of the "social engineer" who seeks to change peoples's estimations of themselves, their roles and their participation in their societies for the better.<sup>7</sup>

Revitalization of Islam was not an easy task to be undertaken considering the political and social atmosphere that Shari'ati was living in. The obstacles that Shari'ati encountered were in the attitudes and opinions held by the

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<sup>7</sup>Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), p. 149.



masses, intellectuals and officials of the regime; they were:

1. Rejection of Islam as a progressive religion especially by the majority of the intellectuals;
2. Opposition of the regime to the spread of a "progressive" view of Islam;
3. Misinterpretation and apathy of the reactionary clergy toward a progressive approach to Islam.

In the 1960's and 1970's, it had become a common norm in Iran for the educated and intellectuals to perceive religion as something archaic. It had become a symbol of modernity for the educated class to claim that they were indifferent and void of religious practice and that they had no religious commitments. Shari'ati said in this regard:

The same way that our educated go to Europe for education and return home as doctors, engineers, surgeons, and ....Our intellectuals also return as sociologists, fascists, existentialists, Marxists, and radicals to our society in search of employment.<sup>10</sup>

Shari'ati believed that these intellectuals might gain personal gratification in their political opinions and commitments, but as far as their society and people's needs were concerned, the outcome had been devastating.

Shari'ati was against the adoption of western ideological schools and thoughts (as revolutionary ideologies) that were

<sup>10</sup>All Shari'ati, *Barz-Gasht, [Return]* (Tehran: Hoseiniyeh Ershad, n.d.), p. 301.

alien to the average person in the Iranian society. Iranian intellectuals were indeed familiar with Western schools of thought, but the rest of the nation, the masses did not have any exposure to foreign revolutionary ideologies. This was a major issue that had preoccupied Shari'ati's mind when he was deciding to publish either the translation of Sartre's book Being and Nothingness, or the book that he eventually translated and published about the life and character of Abuzar. This was a crucial decision and one of the most important decisions that Shari'ati had to confront. Nevertheless, once, he made up his mind, the road was paved and he knew what direction he was going to adopt for his future. He chose to publish Abuzar. Five consecutive editions followed and at least one hundred thousand people must have read it according to Shari'ati's own estimation.<sup>11</sup> Why? Shari'ati explained:

Abuzar was the Prophet's companion and a disciple of Imam Ali, he was a pious man and admired throughout the Muslim community for his integrity and the principles which he stood for....Who was Abuzar? A great revolutionary who was anti-aristocracy, anti-dictatorship, anti-capitalism, anti-poverty and anti-discrimination.<sup>12</sup>

One of the central and essential themes of the above book was a statement made by Abuzar that Shari'ati analyzed with

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<sup>11</sup>Baz-Gasht, p. 307.

<sup>12</sup>Baz-Gasht, pp. 307-308.

enthusiasm and political implications. It was by assertions like this that Abuzar had become anti-aristocracy and anti-establishment, "I am stunned at someone who does not find a loaf of bread in his house and yet does not rebel with his naked sword against all of the people."<sup>19</sup> After the death of the Prophet, Abuzar was still a devout believer of the true Islam and could not tolerate oppression and exploitation of any kind. He preached the idealistic notions of Islam against those fabricated notions that the political establishment was advocating for its own interests and exploitation of the masses.

Shari'ati, knowing the psychology of the people in Iran, was certain that the words of Abuzar would relay the message contained in his book to the masses. Which message was Shari'ati referring to? That Abuzar was a revolutionary individual. In other words, he chose to write about Abuzar, not because he was an outstanding religious figure, but because of Abuzar's anti-establishment activities against an establishment which was corrupt.

As an intellectual dedicated to the subject of sociology, and as an expert on the socio-cultural history of Shi'ism, Shari'ati had reached the conclusion that Shi'ism was the best revolutionary ideology for the oppressed masses in Iran, and Shi'ism was also the best means of communication

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<sup>19</sup>Baz-Gasht, p. 308.

with the masses. This side of Shi'ism, however, was not evident for the masses of Iran who had always been taught and preached a passive picture of Shi'ism. Before declaring Shi'ism as a revolutionary ideology, Shari'ati had to prove to the masses that the religion that they knew was a fabricated religion and there was more to Shi'ism than what they had been exposed to. He identified the passive Shi'ism that the masses were familiar with as "faith" and his revolutionary Shi'ism as "ideology."

In the way that Islam as a religion was being approached and preached by the traditional Ulama, Islam was an end in itself and did not accomplish any purpose. In Weberian perspective, it was an ethic of world rejection. However, there was a small group of Ulama and non-clerical intellectuals like Shari'ati and Mohandes Bazargan who had a different approach to Islam. For them, Islam was a means and not an end in itself. Shari'ati called this an informative Islam, a kind of Islam that would help develop an identity and a purpose among Muslims. This identity would not be something alien like a western school of thought such as Marxism, but would serve to unify Muslims against Western encroachment and domestic exploitation.

This was indeed one of the major themes of Shari'ati's Eslam-Shenasi (Islamology), in which he kept emphasizing the need for an informative Islam against a traditional and

illiterate perspective of Islam which served no purpose. It is the informative Islam that stresses self-development and other-development, to lead Muslims to social awareness as well as political awareness.

The role and impact of religion on human society, has been studied by a number of scholars. In one of such studies pertinent to the revolutionary role of religions, Lewy explained four conditions in which religions could assume a revolutionary posture:

1. Millenarian revolts occur when (a), situations of disorientation develop, and the causes are not clearly perceived or appear insoluble by ordinary and available remedies; (b), when a society or group is deeply attached to religious ways of thinking about the world and when the religion of that society attaches importance to millenarian ideas; (c), when an individual or a group of individuals, obsessed with salvationist fantasies succeeds in establishing charismatic leadership over a social movement.
2. Militant religious nationalism arises among colonized people in situations of awakening national consciousness. Religion supplies a sense of national identity; it becomes a symbol of self assertion against the colonial regime which is usually indifferent, if not hostile, to the native creed.
3. The leaders of religious bodies with a developed ecclesiastical organization support a revolutionary upheaval because they are sympathetic to the aims of this revolution or because they are protecting the interests of the religious institution. These interests can be temporal or spiritual or both. They can involve the defense of worldly possessions or the protection of the mission of the religious institution as the channel of divine grace to man.
4. Individual theologians or laymen support a revolutionary movement to give a concrete social and political meaning to the transcendent elements

of their faith as in the Christian "Theology of Revolution." Such religious revolutionaries often work in concert with secular revolutionary movements and many lose their identity in them.<sup>14</sup>

In Lewy's perspective, Shari'ati was attempting to unify the integrational elements of religion with its radical native elements which he had observed in Shi'ism. It was with an approach like this to religion which of course had been ignored by the traditional Ulama according to Shari'ati, that he attempted to revitalize them. In doing so, Shari'ati attempted to reinterpret Islam not as "a collection of dogma", but as a "school of thought" and as an "ideology." He presented Islam as a progressive and responsive religion, not archaic but modern in its realization of the current issues that the society was facing. It was first by publishing "Islam-Shenasi" and then his speeches in the Ershad and around the universities of the nation that he pointed out and emphasized the ideological and progressive nature and message of Islam. Hamid Algar distinguished this vital mission that Shari'ati undertook:

With his speeches and his writings and other resistance activities, he had caused the authorities to open a file on him. He was never able to remain silent and to accept the negative equilibrium that had been established in society. He fought on two fronts simultaneously. He opposed the extreme traditionalists who had spun a web around themselves, separated Islam from society,

<sup>14</sup>John Lewy, Religion and Revolution (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 585-86.

retreated into a corner of the mosque and the Madrasa, and often reacted negatively to any kind of intellectual movement within society. They had covered the brilliant truths of Islam with a dark veil behind which they themselves also hid. He also opposed the rootless and imitative intellectuals who had made the "new scholasticism" their stronghold. Both groups had severed their relations with society and the masses of the people and humbly bowed their heads before the manifestations of corruption and decadence of the modern age.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time that Shari'ati was making his revolutionary and emotional lectures at Ershad, deep down, he was struggling with his personal affections, sentiments and disappointments. He constantly grieved and suffered for the ills and miseries of Persia. One of such disappointments was his astonishment that in a Muslim country like Iran, there was not one worthy book about Imam Ali, the first Imam of the Shi'ites and his companions. He considered it shameful that it was a Christian, George Jourdaq, who had studied thoroughly the life and contributions of Imam Ali. And Abuzar, a Shi'ite, was studied by an Egyptian scholar who also happened to be a Sunni. Most of all, he was disappointed with the Iranian scholars, the Ulama, and the intellectuals as well as the religious community who stayed idle while a Frenchman (Massignon) wrote about "Salman Farsi", the first Persian to have embraced Islam and to have become so close to the Prophet that he was considered a mem-

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<sup>15</sup>Ali Shari'ati, On the Sociology of Islam, trans. Hamid Algar, (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979), pp. 20-21.

ber of his household.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Shari'ati became the first Persian Shi'ite intellectual who began a serious, literary and scholarly investigation of progressive Islamic concepts and personalities. As he understood, had he translated the western schools of thought and analyzed works of such writers as Sartre, and Marx, he would have gained the legitimacy to be accepted in non-religious circles of intellectuals. But, he did not find a fulfillment of a need nor an achievement of a purpose in his society by entering the circle of the intellectuals in this superficial manner. He saw the dignity and responsibility of a true intellectual (Roshan-Fekr) to be:

The duty of today's intellectual is to recognize and know Islam as a school of thought that gives life to man, individual, society, and that is entrusted with the mission of the future guidance of mankind.<sup>17</sup>

If there has not been made any progress in the past in Islamic nations, that has been because, first, Islamic nations and their intellectuals had been ignorant of the dynamics of Islam as an ideology. Those who were not able to achieve any progress in Islamic societies, despite their efforts, could not determine what needed to be done, Shari'ati said. The second reason was that the leadership

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<sup>16</sup>On the Sociology of Islam, pp. 40-41.

<sup>17</sup>On the Sociology of Islam, p. 42.



of the national and social movements in the third world countries has been in the hands of the intellectuals who have been totally alien and estrange to their own cultures and societies. In most of these societies, Shari'ati argued, the masses have fought and sacrificed their lives for a cause, and then left the leadership in the hands of such individuals who did not even participate in the revolutionary turmoil, most of them being out of the country at this time. Therefore, Shari'ati proposed that:

Our first task is then, the knowledge of our religion and our school of thought. Yes, centuries after our historical adhesion to this great religion, we must still begin unfortunately with an attempt at knowing our religion.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, he began the task of unveiling the truth and facts of an Islam that had been ignored or at best underestimated by the intellectuals and religious leaders. He was, however, selective in the topics and issues that he considered for debate and analysis. He was selective because Islam was to be only a means for Shari'ati and not an end in itself. The whole society could be changed by creating a common and mutual goal among the masses, said Shari'ati.<sup>17</sup> Some of the most important Islamic issues that Shari'ati wrote about and discussed in his lectures which were relevant and sig-

<sup>16</sup>On the Sociology of Islam, p. 42.

<sup>17</sup>Shari'ati, Islam-Shenasī, p. 254.

nificant in conversion of Islam from a collection of theological principles and dogma "faith" to a revolutionary religion, "ideology", were: the Islamic world view, Maktab, Ummat and the concept of religion as a movement and as an institution.

### **Tauhid: The Islamic World View According to Shari'ati**

Shari'ati explained the concept of an Islamic world view in "Tauhid." In a religious perspective, Tauhid in Islam refers to monotheism and oneness of God. Shari'ati, however, believed in Tauhid as a world view which holds that the entire universe is a unity, between God, nature and man. All these three have the same origin, in that they are not alien and remote from each other; they have the same direction, the same will, the same spirit, the same motion, and the same life.<sup>20</sup> According to the Tauhid world view, there is no innate contradiction or disharmony in the world. There is no contradiction between man and nature, spirit and body, this world and the hereafter. The opposite pole of Tauhid is Shirk, according to Shari'ati, which considers the universe as being composed of disunity, contradiction and

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<sup>20</sup>On the Sociology of Islam, p. 87.

conflicting tendencies. All forms of Shirk are thus to be rejected by the Tauhid world view. Tauhid also rejects any kind of dependency of man on any social force, making man subservient to only one power and to answer directly before one judge for his hopes and desires which have the same source--the Qibla (which is the direction of Mecca that Muslims face at the time of prayers). Finally, Tauhid offers mankind a sense of dignity and independence. By submitting to God, man is to revolt against all lying powers.<sup>21</sup>

Tauhid is one of the five pillars of belief in Islam which a Muslim must believe in order to be a Shi'ite Muslim. Shari'ati, however, believed in Tauhid more than just on the religious ground. In a speech delivered at the college of Petroleum in Abadan in 1969, Shari'ati discussed the issue of an Islamic (Shi'ite) world view. According to him, the issue of a world view is a philosophical topic as well as a sociological and anthropological one. A man's world view is a manifestation of specific material and intellectual dimensions of his society. Shari'ati said:

The ample significance of this issue lies in that everyone behaves according to his outlook of the universe. The picture that we have in our mind about existence, affects directly our actions, and individual life. Everyone lives according to his own worldview. Thus, consideration of world views is indeed the consideration of human beings, and studying the world view of every Maktab (school of

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

thought), every group and nation is relevant to understanding the structural quality, essence, and characteristics of that group or nation.<sup>22</sup>

Shari'ati's theory of an Islamic world view is that man, as a free and responsible being, faces choice between God and a contradictory Satan, which creates a dialectical movement of thesis and anti-thesis in mankind. Thus, dualism and contradiction between good and evil does not exist in the universe, but exists in mankind.<sup>23</sup> Mankind is seen by Shari'ati as a dialectical being who is set in constant motion by destiny and it is this motion that creates constant struggle in mankind. This struggle in turn leads mankind to a state of permanent "becoming", a migration within that leads mankind to perfection. This perfection and the migration within transforms mankind from the status of (lajan), soil to the status of God and the path that makes such a transformation possible is "Mazhab"-faith or religion.<sup>24</sup>

Ayatollah Motah'hari, a former student of Ayatollah Khomeini who was martyred in 1979, wrote extensively about various scholarly and philosophical subjects related to

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<sup>22</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Jahan-Bini va ideh-ology [World View and Ideology], Collected Works, no. 23., (Tehran: Ershad Publications, 1982), p. 5.

<sup>23</sup>Eslam-Shenasi, p. 62.

<sup>24</sup>Eslam-Shenasi, pp. 64-65.

Islam, among which was the Islamic world view of Tauhid. He divided such an outlook in the two areas of theory and practice. Theoretical Tauhid belongs to the class of knowledge: right thinking, insight into perfection, perception of the unity of God; whereas Tauhid in practice belongs to the class of being and becoming, especially right being and right becoming; it is a movement toward perfection and bringing man into unity with the nature and universe<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup>Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari, Fundamentals of Islamic Thought: God, Man, and the Universe Trans. from the Persian by : R.Campbell, (Berkeley, Mizan Press, 1985)

### **A Dichotomous Approach to Religion--A Durkheimian View**

In his attempt to illustrate the progressive notion of religion in contrast to a reactionary and archaic approach to religion, Shari'ati followed the Durkheimian tradition. He also believed in the dichotomy of religion as located between a movement and an institution, which Durkheim had developed as the "state of effervescence" and "mechanical or organic solidarity." This dichotomy also appeared in Weber's distinction between charisma and "patrimonial and bureaucratic phase of life." Works by Tonnies and Marx also reflected such dichotomy of social states where the former spoke about "community" and "society" and the latter about the existence of "consciousness and awareness of the individual" about the forces of production. Among other sociologists who studied the subject matter of sociology, or some topics of it, using a dichotomous division, was, Karl Mannheim who made contrast between "utopian" and "ideological" states of thought. Alberoni undertook an extensive study of this dichotomy in his study of the development of society, which he referred to as the "two social states."

The two poles of this dichotomy were "the nascent state" and "the everyday-institutional state."<sup>24</sup>

Shari'ati's definition of religion as a movement resembles Durkheim's state of effervescence, Weber's charismatic leadership and Alberoni's nascent state. Alberoni defined the nascent state as:

....An exploration of the limits of the possible within a given type of social system, in order to maximize that portion of experience and solidarity which is realizable for oneself and for others as a specific historical moment.<sup>25</sup>

According to Alberoni, the nascent state is a form of social transition from one form to another. In this transition, there is a disruption of institutional social relations and various forms of everyday life after which the subsystem enters a new state.

Shari'ati himself, however, believed that the Durkheimian approach to religion was to be viewed more as a collection of social traditions and customs, an expression of the communal spirit and will.<sup>26</sup> This view of religion, according to Shari'ati, was what he called "Mazhab-e Sunnati"; which

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<sup>24</sup>Francisco Alberoni, Movements and Institutions (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 4.

<sup>25</sup>Alberoni, pp. 20-21.

<sup>26</sup>Shari'ati, Jahan-Bini, p. 74.

meant "traditional religion". He then spoke about another notion which was in contrast with the Sunnati view of religion and that was the concept of religion as an "ideology". The difference between the two approaches was quite significant and Shari'ati stressed this difference emphatically:

Religion has two aspects, one is antagonistic to the other. For example, nobody has hatred against religion as much as I do and nobody has hope in religion as much as I do.<sup>27</sup>

Shari'ati's hatred against religion stemmed from his Marxist interpretation of Islam, that could act as a reactionary force in the society, used as an opium among the people, to acquiesce to the political and economic status quo. Religion could also act as a dynamic force to be used in humanitarian and revolutionary movements for the perfection of mankind. In his writings, Shari'ati referred to the former notion of religion as an "institution" and the latter view as a "movement." Religion as a movement according to Shari'ati was:

A spirit and a motion which is moving towards a purpose, and all its followers, and all the issues, orders, ideas and functions, slogans and even ceremonies which exist among its followers, all aim at that purpose, and everything and every-

<sup>27</sup>Shari'ati, Jahan-Bini, p. 73.



body is an instrument to accomplish that purpose for which the movement has come to exist.<sup>30</sup>

Along the road, the movement will meet obstacles, said Shari'ati, and struggle will be inevitable. Also, dynamism and a clear goal would be a part of the movement. Thus, struggle, sacrifice, a dynamic spirit and a clear purpose are distinguishing characteristics of the movement. The purpose of the movement is to change the status quo and bring about a new era and create new conditions. Therefore, the direction of the movement would be toward the existing establishment. A complete transition takes place by such a movement. The movement either achieves its goal, which here, is the establishment of the Islamic community, the Ummat, or without achieving its aim reaches its ultimate power. In this case, since the movement does not face any obstacles or threats, once at the height of its power, it goes through another transition and comes to a halt and ceases to function as a movement and becomes an institution:

The movement then loses its dynamic and revolutionary nature and adopts a conservative attitude. Then, it aims at disarming the enemy and changing the social structure and the existing establishment. But, when the movement becomes powerful and authoritative it seeks to protect itself. Thus, it takes an anti-revolutionary position and

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<sup>30</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Tashayyo-eh Alavi va Tashayyo-eh Safavi [Alavid Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism] (Tehran: Hoseiniyeh Ershad, n.d.), pp. 37-38.

suppresses any forthcoming revolutions as rebellions, betrayals and anti-revolutionaries.<sup>21</sup>

As an example, Shari'ati wrote about the historical development of Zoroastrianism in Persia. This religion started as a movement in the reign of Ashkanids among the people and at the height of its popularity, when it became the official religion of the state under the Sassanids, it became an institution. During this period, while fire temples were being built all over the vast empire as a symbol of the religious power, the spirit of Zoroastrianism had come to a halt. It was at this time that the Persian society witnessed the "Mazdak" and "Mani" movements, as leaders of new religions challenged Zoroastrianism. In due respect, Shari'ati claimed that it was Islam as a "Movement" that conquered the vast and powerful empire of Persia in the seventh century that had adhered to Zoroastrianism as an "Institution."<sup>22</sup>

Now, the same has happened to Shi'ism and it has been changed to an institution, Shari'ati claimed. This transition officially took place in 1501, when the Safavid dynasty came to power in Iran (chapter 6) and established their rule on the basis of Shi'ite history and doctrine.

<sup>21</sup>Shari'ati, Tashayyo-eh, pp. 38-39.

<sup>22</sup>Shari'ati, Tashayyo-eh, pp. 39-46.

The challenge that the first Islamic community imposed upon the Persian Empire thirteen centuries ago, was one of the best examples of a paradigm used by Shari'ati to illustrate his ultimate argument that the mighty power of the Shah's regime could crumble in the face of Islam as a movement since it had happened in the past.

## Institutionalization of Marxism

According to Alberoni, when the nascent state ceases to exist, the social system "returns to everyday life and institutional forms", even though a transformation has taken place.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the nascent state changes at a certain point where it becomes either dissolved, extinguished or institutionalized. At this point the relations between the members return to the everyday manner. The same process was identified by Weber, in his analysis of the state of charisma, in which he believed that it was the pressures of everyday life, and economic interests that could bring the charismatic era to an end.<sup>34</sup> In his argument of institutionalization of movement, Shari'ati offered a similar explanation to that of Weber. He used ideological pressures instead of economic pressures, signifying the termination of the movement.

Indeed, Shari'ati applied the same analysis to the development of Marxism in the nineteenth century. He argued that at its beginning, at the time of Marx, Engels, Proudhon and Saint Simon and during the years of 1860 to 1870, Germany, France and England witnessed vast and powerful labor move-

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<sup>33</sup>Alberoni, p. 20.

<sup>34</sup>Alberoni, pp. 45-46.

ments; and this was because Marxism was a movement at this phase. Later on, however, after leading to some great revolutions and gaining power, in the last fifteen years Marxism is changing into an institution, to a ruling power. According to Shari'ati, Marxism has declined to a state ideology and has become an obstacle confronting liberation, nationalistic and anti-colonial movements.<sup>35</sup>

This was one of the rare occasions that Shari'ati mentioned Marxism in his lectures or writings despite his knowledge that this was a great sin in the eyes of the regime. However, since Shari'ati cleverly criticized Marxism and confessed to its inability as a revolutionary movement in this day and age, the regime could tolerate such innocent deviation. Shari'ati's condemnation of Marxism, however, was not to satisfy the regime, his intention was to convince leftist intellectuals, the superiority of his "revived Shi'ism" in contrast to Marxism which had no use, nor any function among the third world countries according to Shari'ati.

#### The Concept of Religion as an Ideology

It was mentioned earlier that Shari'ati referred to Durkheim's approach to religion which was "an expression of the

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<sup>35</sup>Shari'ati, Tashayyo-eh, pp. 44-45.

communal will and spirit" as "Mazhab-e Sunnati" or traditional religion. Here, the individual is brought up blindly according to the principles of that faith without himself making the choice. This kind of religious belief is passed on from one generation to the next by parents.<sup>24</sup> When a religion is at its institutional state, the focus of its followers would be on religious practices and ceremonies. However, as a movement the most crucial element of the religion would be its ideology. In contrast to religion on traditional basis, Shari'ati speaks of religion as an "ideology" which is a faith that an individual, a class or a nation selects consciously and with awareness. Mazhab (faith) as an ideology according to Shari'ati is: "an opinion selected by choice and awareness on the basis of some existing needs and disarrays for the implementation of certain ideals that the individual or class is dedicated to".<sup>27</sup> It is quite obvious that Shari'ati's approach to religion as an ideology is in line with Marxist interpretation of class consciousness of the individual:

Therefore, the individual senses his class relationship, senses his current condition, his social, economic and political conditions and suffers, he is aware of the predicaments and is

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<sup>24</sup>Shari'ati, Jahan-Bini, p. 78.

<sup>27</sup>Shari'ati, Jahan-Bini, p. 78.

critical of the status quo and thus, wishes a change and transition.<sup>22</sup>

It is at this stage that the individual begins to seek a solution against the status quo and looks for an ideology whose slogans would be compatible with his ideals. Then, he selects an ideology. This Nazhab (faith) in this situation is equal to an ideology and nothing less, said Shari'ati.

Religion and faith as an ideology is a deviation from Durkheim's definition of religion. Shari'ati referred to the earlier history of Islam and the issue of Islamization of Persians to explain this phenomenon. In the seventh century, when Persians converted to Islam, they practically deviated from their traditional religion (Zoroastrianism) and turned away from a faith that expressed in Durkheimian perspective, was their communal will and spirit. Shari'ati believed that there were two reasons for the Persians to act in such a revolutionary manner:

1. Persians suffered from oppression and class inequality, whereas justice was Islam's vivid slogan.
2. Persians were disdained and disillusioned by the autocratic and aristocratic rule of the monarchy. Islam offered an alternative and escape from the status quo as it spread the belief in the Imamate, (succession of Imams who were all descendants of the Prophet and were all infallible, the first of whom was Imam Ali).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-79.

In Islam, Persians hoped to find the Divine rule with the prophesy of the Messenger of God, replacing the corrupt and oppressive rule of the Sassanid monarchs. Thus, the Persians saw the reflections of their ideals in the slogans that Islam introduced with its invasion. In other words, this was rather an ideological invasion and not a military invasion.<sup>37</sup>

Religion in its traditional form is accessible to all people and to follow or to believe in this type of religion requires no sophistication but, Shari'ati queried, is this the case with an ideology? Is ideology as easily accessible to the individual or has it certain requirements like education, study of philosophy or attendance of lectures on mysticism? Shari'ati's response was that:

Ideology is a specific awareness and it is inclusively for mankind and everyone can acquire it. Scholar or commoner, educated or uneducated, aristocrat or non-aristocrat. Everyone in any level of culture, science, or any genius, can acquire ideological awareness.<sup>38</sup>

With this approach to ideology, Shari'ati criticized the educated class (intelligentsia) of not only Iranian society, but that of all the third world countries. His stand was that, unlike what has been the common belief, not all the

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 80-81.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 78.



educated and not all the intellectuals possess an ideology. Shari'ati did not believe in a cause and effect relation between education and ideology. A person may be completely illiterate and yet possess an ideology. He does not have to be the creator of an ideology and can be a believer in an ideology as long as his belief is acquired with awareness. This is exactly the position of Islam in Africa and North America, according to Shari'ati, where the black population of these continents are converting to Islam, based on the ideological grounds of Islam. It is Islam as an ideology that meets the needs of the black population on issues such as social justice and equality."<sup>1</sup>

### The Maktab

In one of his earlier works, Islam-Shenasi, (Islamology) which was published at a time of very severe repression and censorship, Shari'ati used one concept repeatedly. The concept "Maktab", and the meaning that Shari'ati related to that concept in Islam-Shenasi, correlated strongly with what Shari'ati later defined as "Ideology". In Islam-Shenasi, Shari'ati gives a definition for each of the above concepts. In reference to Ideology, he said:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

Islamic ideology cannot be acquired by means of learning and expertise, but it has to be sensed as a faith, an opinion, a humanitarian and historical and intellectual movement, not as a pile up of technical and scientific information.<sup>42</sup>

Even though Shari'ati's definition of ideology was so strong that he interpreted it as "religion" in Islam-Shenasi, he also defined Maktab as a very important concept in Islamic ideology:

A Maktab is the collection of a symmetrical and harmonious philosophical outlook, religious beliefs, moral values and practical methods which have a cause and effect relationship and which make up a meaningful dynamic body with a sense of direction. That dynamic body is alive and all its organs nourish themselves from one blood stream and possess one single soul.<sup>43</sup>

Marxism and Fascism will be considered each as a Maktab in this perspective. Shari'ati considered Maktab as a central focus of man which gave him direction and meaning in life: "An individual who has Maktab also has a harmonious judgment in all issues concerning his life."<sup>44</sup>

Maktab and Ideology make up the very core of Shari'ati's interpretation of Islam. These two concepts become guidelines for the construction of a revolutionary Shi'ism to be used and to lead the masses in their struggle against

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<sup>42</sup>Shari'ati, Islam-Shenasi, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

the Shah's regime. The kind of Islam that Shari'ati witnessed being practiced and preached by the clergymen possessed neither Maktab nor Ideology. It was a collection of religious knowledge which did not prescribe any medicine to its followers, and worse than all, it had come to a moral halt and ignored the responsibility of its followers who were facing oppression and exploitation.<sup>43</sup> This was in a way close to Weber's ethic of world rejection which Shari'ati called irresponsible Islam.

In his discussions of ideology, I pointed out Shari'ati's emphasis on how that ideology has to be selected informatively and how that ideology will equip the person with political and social consciousness. Maktab in turn: "provides motion, construction and social power. It gives the individual a sense of prophecy and humanitarian responsibility."<sup>44</sup> Each Maktab also entails a structure. The cornerstone of Maktab is the world view of that Maktab.

To trace and compare the similarities of Shari'ati's notions of Maktab and Ideology to Western connotations of the terms, we can begin from Mannheim who traced the historical development of the concept "Ideology". He distinguished two separate meanings for the term. They were the "particular" and the "total" conceptions of the term. The

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

particular notion of the term implied that one was skeptical of the ideas of the opponent.<sup>47</sup> The total notion of ideology referred to:

The ideology of an age or of a concrete historico-social group, e.g. of a class, when we are concerned with the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind of this epoch or of this group.<sup>48</sup>

According to Mannheim, the modern conception of the term "Ideology" began when Napoleon accused a group of philosophers, who had confronted his "imperial ambitions", of being "ideologists." In the nineteenth century, the term was employed widely to connote the tendency of the politician to give precedence to reality over scholastic and "contemplative modes of thought and of life".<sup>49</sup>

The next stage of the development of the term "ideology" appeared to be in the Marxist school of thought where the word was used by a subordinate group as a weapon against the dominant group. Marxism combined the particular and the total conceptions of the term and identified it with class interests. Even though at one point the term "ideology" was identified with Marxism, various schools of thought and even

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<sup>47</sup>Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (New York: Harvest Books, 1936), p. 55.

<sup>48</sup>Mannheim, p. 56.

<sup>49</sup>Mannheim, p. 72.

intellectuals who are opponents of Marxism have begun to use the term, concluded Mannheim.<sup>20</sup>

Shari'ati's analysis of the term "Maktab" could have a dualistic relationship with the Marxist conception of the term "ideology." As a source of class power and humanitarian responsibility, both terms seem to have common connotations. Both terms give direction and a dynamic motion to their followers. In regard to Shari'ati's approach to the term Ideology, he defined it as "an awareness that can be acquired by all of mankind regardless of their education and cultural background," he seemed to be in total agreement with Marxism. However, Shari'ati described the term Maktab in a religious context and necessity, and as an inseparable principle of Islamic doctrine. In this respect, Shari'ati's analysis of the term and Marxist concept of religion in general tend to be contradictory. According to Shari'ati, Ideology and Maktab make up the pillars of the perfect society in Islam, the "Ummat", whereas, for Marx, ideology could serve as the savior of mankind, religion served to enslave mankind.

<sup>20</sup>Mannheim, pp. 72-75.

## The Ummat

Shari'ati indicated that the first person who motivated him to study the concept of "Ummat", was the noted Islamic Scholar, Montgomery Watt. The concept of "ideal society" has been discussed in various schools of thought and has received different definitions, e.g. it stands for a class-less society in Marxism. Karl Mannheim spoke about wish-fulfillment of two kinds. One that takes place through projection into time and one that takes place through projection of space. He called spatial wishes "utopias" and temporal wishes "chiliasms." He described utopian as: "All situationally transcendent ideas (not only wish-projections) which in any way have a transforming effect upon the existing historical-social order".<sup>81</sup> Shari'ati, on the other hand, described Ummat as the ideal Islamic society:

Ummat is a society composed of individuals with mutual thoughts, paths, paces and goals who all share a sense of responsibility and are moving toward a single, shared, direct, known, and consistent destination.<sup>82</sup>

In short, said Shari'ati, Ummat is a society in whose roots lie "commitment", "dynamism" and "evolution." Among various

<sup>81</sup>Mannheim, p. 205.

<sup>82</sup>Shari'ati, Shi'ah, p. 42.

possible terms, such as groups, tribe, society, class, and nation, Shari'ati asked, why was "Ummat" selected to stand for the ideal society in Islam? This was a topic of one of Shari'ati's lectures at Ershad under the title, "The Sociology of Ummat and Imamate" which he delivered in 1971. He argued the following analysis of the word "Ummat."

The term Ummat is derived from the word "Umm" which means path, travel, going forth, moving in a straight and consistent path and pilgrimage. Consequently, "Ummat" refers to a group of people who have gathered around each other by choice to take a pilgrimage, a journey to a certain destination with a mutual bond, just like a caravan. The conscious and selective participation of the group in this Ummat distinguishes it from other sociological terms from the same family like tribe, nation and society where membership is based on birth, ethnic and cultural background, elements which are irrelevant to Ummat.<sup>53</sup> Shari'ati emphasized three concepts that made Ummat distinct from other social groups and they were; "commitment", "dynamism" and "evolution." These characteristics of an Ummat provide motion and keep it moving in a specific direction.

Since Ummat is in constant motion and its innate characteristic is "becoming" rather than "being", it will require a leadership that Shari'ati identified in "Imamate." Imamate

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<sup>53</sup>Shari'ati, Shi'eh, p. 41.

is the succession of Imams who are descendants of the Prophet, the first of whom is Imam Ali and according to Shi'ite doctrine, the last Imam has been in occultation to reappear in the day of judgment. The position of Imamate becomes very important as the Ummat is threatened by "stagnation" and "remaining" on one hand, and the danger of "joy" that replaces "betterment" and "perfection" on the other hand.

Imamate or "leadership of the Ummat" is the engine of the society and of faith and the factor that provides it with direction, said Shari'ati. He saw the Imam as the personality who could carry the mission of leadership of the Ummat.<sup>54</sup>

Following the above sociological and historical explanation of the concept of Ummat, Shari'ati then presented his audience the notion of Imam and the significance of his leadership in the Ummat. This was one of the occasions that Shari'ati had to convey his lecture in allegory. Indirectly making a reference to the numerous titles and ceremonies that the Shah was receiving in Iran on a regular basis like the occasions when his ministers had to bow and kiss his hand, Shari'ati commented:

A person like an Imam is not to be worshipped,  
since not only him but the greatest personality of

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 46-47.



the universe who was the best example of an Imam and that was the Prophet himself, prophesied monotheism and forbade "Shirk" (implying that no being other than the Creator could be worshipped). Such a personality is called "Imam" or leader, not in its fascistic and autocratic sense ....<sup>22</sup>

As it was pointed out earlier (chapter 4), Shari'ati's return to Iran coincided with the exile of the Ayatollah Khomeini from Iran. Since the Ayatollah had played an active role in opposing and criticizing the regime of the Shah, Shari'ati's lecture on "the sociology of Imamate" also served to legitimized Ayatollah's participation and leadership from a dogmatic point of view, as well as reaffirming his spiritual leadership.

The concept of Imamate and leadership, appeared in a similar approach in the works of Mannheim, who spoke of the significance of a single individual as the forerunner of the establishment of a utopia:

It happens very often that the dominant utopia first arises as the wish-fantasy of a single individual and does not until later become incorporated into the political aims of a more inclusive group which at each successive stage can be sociologically determined with more exactness.<sup>24</sup>

If the Ummat attains a stable and stagnant condition, in the sense of not being a dynamic force, this community will then

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>24</sup>Mannheim, p. 206.

collapse in the wake of internal contradiction, corruption, or an invasion from outside social conditions. As a strategy of mobilization, Shari'ati declared that even if an Ummat was left with certain social, economic or political backwardness and turmoil from the past, it would be the responsibility of the current members of the Ummat to struggle against these misfortunes and if they fail to do so, they would be directly responsible and cannot blame others for their miseries.

Shari'ati could not be more direct and straight than this. What he was implying was that everyone of the audience and his readers were responsible for the social and political conditions that they were living in. If the country was not blessed with social justice and political freedom, the blame had to go to the members of that society, simply because they had not sought to change the status quo. If there was a tyrant ruler in the country and corruption was destroying the nation, who was to be blamed? Not the Shah, not his ministers and SAVAK agents, not the regime, but the Muslims who were living and tolerating them in that society. according to Shari'ati, the Muslims themselves some of whom happened to be his audience were to be blamed. Those individuals who were listening to him or were reading his bitter truth about themselves and their lack of responsibility were encouraged to be mobilized against the unjust rule of the Shah.

So, the word passed from one person, one society, one high school and one university to another. It was time to wake up and do something about the plight that they were living in. The audience was led to believe that they were the only ones who could save themselves, if they do not, nobody else will. Thus, the whole society must be mobilized with one Maktab, one Ideology, one slogan and one goal.

There are no borders and boundaries for the Ummat of Muslims. Another similarity to Marxism is evident in Shari'ati's analysis of the socio-economic foundation of Ummat. There is no breakdown of social class, everyone is a compatriot in the Ummat and shares all the responsibilities as a member. As soon as the person reaches maturity, he must carry the burden of all the commitments and responsibilities of the Ummat on his or her shoulders. Shari'ati indicates that because the Ummat does not have any political boundaries the concept of Ummat becomes identical to that of a party (chapter 6-Shi'ism, a complete party), rather than that of a utopian society. The idea of perfection is not limited to a single Ummat but to a universal prophecy:

It is here that we see "Ummat" is closer to a complete and sufficient "Party" rather than "Society". Its prophecy is not the "Perfection" of itself, but in addition, it carries a universal prophecy and commitment.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Shari'ati, Shi'eh, p. 54.



### The Social Dedication of an Ummat

In addition to the characteristics identified in the Imamate of the Ummat, there is yet three other significant principles tied to Ummat. Two of such principles are: the admonition of good deeds and the prohibition of bad deeds. There is an overwhelming similarity between this principle and Max Weber's ethic of responsibility (Verantwortungsethik) and ethic of absolute ends (Gesinnungsethik)<sup>88</sup>. This indeed is the universal commitment of the members of an Ummat, which Shari'ati refers to as "practical social responsibility" who like Michael Walzer's revolutionary saints were determined to destroy the traditional order, reform human society and create a Holy Commonwealth "in which conscientious activity would be encouraged and even required".<sup>89</sup>

Shari'ati makes reference to the Sura "Al-e Omran"; verse 110 in the Qur'an. In this verse the description of the best Ummat in the Holy Qur'an is of an Ummat which has made an insurrection on behalf of the people. This Ummat depends on three principles:

<sup>88</sup>Dennis H. Wrong, Skeptical Sociology. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 263.

<sup>89</sup>Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1965), P. 3.

1. Admonition to do good deeds;
2. The prohibition against performing bad deeds;
3. Belief in one God.<sup>40</sup>

Traditional experts of Islam and interpreters of the Qur'an in the past have paid little or no attention to the ordering of the above principles. Indeed Ayatollah Motah'hari made an interesting observation. He realized that the two commands, the admonition of good deeds and the prohibition of bad deeds had disappeared from the religious textbooks in the last 200 years.<sup>41</sup>

Shari'ati emphasized the significance of the first two principles to a point that he considered the belief in God to be secondary to admonition and prohibition:

How astonishing! Why do these commands appear in such an order? What kind of a social order is this? First, the admonition for doing good deeds, second prohibiting bad deeds, and third, demanding belief in one God?<sup>42</sup>

The astonishment that Shari'ati felt was due to the emphasis of the Qur'an. No matter how much faith in God an Ummat might have, without their commitment and responsibility toward fellow believers and their faith, they cannot be con-

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-79.

<sup>41</sup>Ayatollah Morteza Motah'hari, Enghelab-e Eslami [Islamic Revolution] (Qom: Amir Publications, Collection of Sermons and lectures, no date. One of the sermons has a date, however, which is the Winter of 1978.), pp. 54-57.

<sup>42</sup>Shari'ati, Shi'eh, p. 77.

sidered a Muslim Ummat. Citizens of an Ummat must first offer their commitment, they must begin to satisfy the first two of the three principles! Then, faith in God will be next in the order of significance in their lives. It is only then that the Ummat has safeguarded its responsibility and commitment to the people: Concern for the community and then faith in God.

Ayatollah Motah'hari placed admonition and prohibition in the same category as "Jahad" (Holy War). His interpretation of these two principles was that: "if the existing circumstances were unjust and inhumane, you should not cope and surrender, but you have to do your best to overcome and change the status quo to bring about the ideal conditions back." Islam does not allow you to turn the other side of your face to be slapped on, as does Christianity, said Ayatollah Motah'hari. According to Islam, the most preferred and divine of the Jahads, is that against a tyrant ruler who deceives his people and claims to practice Justice (The Shah).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Enghalab-e Eslami PP. 55-56.

### Summary

Ayatollah Motah'hari and Ali Shari'ati were among the more popular speakers at Ershad (chapter 4) in the closing years of 1960's and early 70's. While Ayatollah Motah'hari was focusing on theological and philosophical issues of Islam and he was trying to present Islam in a modern context, Shari'ati considered all such efforts secondary. For him the immediate issues of concern were not philosophical nor theological, the immediate issues of concern were social and political conditions of the country (political oppression). All the efforts of reinterpretation and revitalization of Islam were only means to mobilize the masses, give them political awareness and an ideology and a leader to follow, so that they would overcome the catastrophic conditions of their society and subsequently establish an Ummat.

Ayatollah Motah'hari eventually withdrew from Ershad and it is only assumed that the two men had their differences; not necessarily ideological, perhaps more in their approach to politicization of Islam and its use in mobilizing the masses. Again, while Ayatollah Motah'hari insisted on the analysis of dogmatic issues in Islam in which he was definitely more educated than Shari'ati, the latter emphasized allegorical sermons to criticize the regime.



Shari'ati's symbolic lectures on the historical development of Islam like the story of the Preacher who rose against the Mongol rulers were all intended to educate his audience toward one goal, and that was mobilization against the regime of the Shah. To do this, he believed that Islam as an ideology and as a movement "Shi'ism" would be the best and most feasible means of education and mobilization of the masses in Iran considering the history and culture of this country.

## CHAPTER 6: ALAVID SHI'ISM AND SAFAVID SHI'ISM

### Introduction:

As a sociologist, as an ideologue, and as a devout Muslim, Shari'ati was discontented and disappointed with the existing approach to Shi'ism and the way it was practiced by the followers of the faith. To him, there were two types of Shi'ism:

a: The true concept of the religion: the way it was practiced by the founders of the religion, that is the Holy Prophet and the twelve Imams (successors) that succeeded him.

b: The falsified concept of the religion: that was anything but the true and genuine principles of Shi'ism. This type of Shi'ism came to exist immediately after the death of the Holy Prophet according to Shari'ati. Since the Safavid Dynasty (founded in 1501), were masters in fabricating Shi'ism to meet their political goals, Shari'ati called such practice of Shi'ism, "Safavid Shi'ism." Since Imam Ali was the first successor of the Holy Prophet and the first infallible Imam, (according to Shi'ites), and also because

of the spiritual and symbolic significance and devotion that Shi'ites manifest toward Him, Shari'ati referred to the genuine and ideal concept of Shi'ism as Alavid Shi'ism.

### **The Potential of Shi'ism**

Throughout Shari'ati's writings and lectures, one finds constant references to Shi'ism, not only as a religious doctrine, but also as a political ideology. Two of his main books were written exclusively on Shi'ism: "Tashayyo-e Safavi va Tashayyo-e Alavi" (Safavid Shi'ism and Alavid Shi'ism), and "Shi-eh" (Shi'ite). It is crucial to study and review Shari'ati's motives and reasons to reinterpret Shi'ism, thus, making it more of a politicized religion.

Shari'ati was born into a religious family and from the very beginning developed strong admiration for early Islamic history and the founders of the religion. In his trip to France, he met the Sheikh (Massignon), and became one of his great admirers, and learned more about Shi'ism (chapter 4). Europe was the ideal environment for him to test the strength of Shi'ism as an ideology against other social and revolutionary ideologies since Shari'ati could study them without the threatening presence of the SAVAK.

In his attempts to reinterpret Shi'ism, Shari'ati was facing two completely different classes. One class was the illiterate segment of the population whose knowledge and sentiments on Shi'ism were dependent and aroused by the reactionary and traditional Ulama or clergymen. These masses were exposed only to superficial aspects of Shi'ism and the true content and potential of the faith was unknown to them as well as to those whose sermons they listened to (the traditional clergy). Although the doors of Ershad were open to all, somehow, illiterate masses rarely found their ways into this center. Those who attended this center, or read Shari'ati's writings were mostly university students, according to Shari'ati.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, his primary concern was to educate and convince them of his reinterpretation of Shi'ism. Shari'ati had a firm knowledge of his audience and its potentials. He had them at Ershad in large numbers, and he knew that his logic, interpretation and rhetorics could make the difference. He could either develop a revolutionary class of intellectuals from those who attended his lectures, or he could totally alienate them from himself and from his paradigm (Revolutionary Shi'ism).

<sup>1</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Tashayyo-eh Alavi va Tashayyo-eh Safavi [Alavid Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism] [Tehran: Student Library of the College of Literature and Humanities, 1973], p. 23.

### Intellectuals and Roshan-Fekr

The next step that Shari'ati took was to analyze, hence, criticize the culture and tradition of intellectualism in Iran who constituted the bulk of his audience. He was aware of the approach and attitude of most of the intellectuals in Iran towards religion. Thus, before allowing them to oppose and reject his new theory of Shi'ism, like Al-o Ahmad and Behrangi, he recalled the weaknesses and calamities of the intellectuals in Persian society. This way, he could illustrate that their rejection of Shari'ati's revolutionary Shi'ism had to stem from their biased position and alienation in the Iranian society.

Once in Europe, Shari'ati could clearly distinguish between those intellectuals from third world countries who had become alienated from their own cultures and those who had not. He made a clear distinction between an "intellectual" and what he referred to as a "Roshan-fekr." The difference to Shari'ati was considerable. He analyzed the word "Roshan-Fekr" in Persian. According to Shari'ati's own analysis, the word "Roshan" means "bright", literally a human being who knows his whereabouts. He is aware and conscious of his "situation".<sup>2</sup> The word, "Fekr" is the noun of

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<sup>2</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Haz-Gasht [Return] (Tehran: Hoseiniyeh Ershad, n. d.), p. 154.

the verb, "Fekr-Kardan," which means, "to think." Shari'ati distinguished between Roshan-Fekr and intellectuals by stating that: first of all, Roshan-fekr does not look to the same class base that the "intellectuals" identify themselves with. To be a Roshan-fekr is a conscientious achievement and not a form of social hierarchy. Shari'ati compared an intellectual to a physician or a technician in a caravan who practices his (her) job without any consideration for the path and direction of the caravan. But, a Roshan-fekr is the leader of the caravan and he is responsible not only for the destination, but for all the calamities that may occur en route. In other words, a Roshan-fekr has to be a politically and socially involved and active person. Furthermore, unlike a sociologist that might have only studied social class movements in history, a Roshan-fekr is someone who senses his own social class, and has a direct and concrete recognition of his class, and takes the responsibility of providing awareness to this class. A Roshan-fekr is someone, according to Shari'ati, who has experienced the reality of the word "masses" by his every day contact with them and he is different from an intellectual who merely reads about them in the texts of Karl Marx and Engels.<sup>2</sup> Thus, an intellectual could be completely alien to the society in which he (she) lives in. It is possible that he may not

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<sup>2</sup>Baz-Gasht, p. 157.

recognize and identify the point of time and the people whom he lives with in a given society. But, the distinct characteristic of a Roshan-Fekr, more than anything else, is his (her) realistic and direct realization of the society in which he lives, and his understanding of his people, recognition of the time, sensing of their suffering and needs, and the ideals of the time. Roshan-Fekran (plural), unlike the intellectuals, do not need to pursue formal education, they do not have to be members of the intelligentsia, nor do they need technological training; all they need is "social awareness dissimilarity of the two cultures and the socio-political factors of the respective environments, as well as the gap of almost four centuries. Iran in the twentieth century was facing distinct issues of her own that were different from France or Germany in the sixteenth or eighteenth century. The important element was that Shari'ati, as an intellectual trained in sociology had discovered the potential of religion as a force in society, something that the traditional Ulama were not as aware.

Weber was preoccupied with the "economic contributions of Protestant ethics" and Durkheim with contributions of religion "to a sense of membership in human society"; the former was predominately historically oriented, and the latter was analytically oriented. But, Shari'ati's preoccupation was with the socio-political conditions of the society, what

Weber referred to as the "the ethic of physical pleasure" side of Islam opposed to "the ethic of world rejection".<sup>4</sup> Based on his studies of Islam, under his father in Iran, and under Massignon abroad, and also his training in sociology, he determined his goals, commitments and major responsibilities as a Roshan-Fekr (chapter 6) to be:

1. To revitalize Islam
2. To make Islam an ideology rather than a collection of historical events and technical instructions
3. To develop a world view based on Islamic ideology
4. To consider a school of thought, called "Maktab"
5. To suggest outlines for an "ideal society" which he called "Ummat"

### **Reinterpretation and Revitalization of Islam**

In his attempt to revitalize Islam, Shari'ati resembled Seyyid Jamal ed-Din al-Afghani. Both men were aware that Islam, as an ideology, could withstand the imperialist and colonial forces and act as a social and political frame of reference in the modern world. Shari'ati, however, was much more advanced than Seyyid Jamal in that he had the educational background and the necessary training and, thus, was capable of reinterpreting Islam in an ideological and sociological framework. More than an ideologue, in the

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<sup>4</sup>Bryan S. Turner, Weber and Islam (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 138.



words of Shahrough Akhavi, Shari'ati was a "social engineer" who sought to:

apply broad concepts to Islamic institutions and processes in the manner of the "social engineer" who seeks to change peoples's estimations of themselves, their roles and their participation in their societies for the better.<sup>2</sup>

Revitalization of Islam was not an easy task to be undertaken considering the political and social atmosphere that Shari'ati was living in. The obstacles that Shari'ati encountered were in the attitudes and opinions held by the masses, intellectuals and officials of the regime; they were:

1. Rejection of Islam as a progressive religion especially by the majority of the intellectuals;
2. Opposition of the regime to the spread of a "progressive" view of Islam;
3. Misinterpretation and apathy of the reactionary clergy toward a progressive approach to Islam.

In the 1960's and 1970's, it had become a common norm in Iran for the educated and intellectuals to perceive religion as something archaic. It had become a symbol of modernity for the educated class to claim that they were indifferent and void of religious practice and that they had no religious commitments. Shari'ati said in this regard:

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<sup>2</sup>Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), p. 149.

The same way that our educated go to Europe for education and return home as doctors, engineers, surgeons, and .... Our intellectuals also return as sociologists, fascists, existentialists, Marxists, and radicals to our society in search of employment.<sup>4</sup>

Shari'ati believed that these intellectuals might gain personal gratification in their political opinions and commitments, but as far as their society and people's needs were concerned, the outcome had been devastating.

Shari'ati was against the adoption of western ideological schools and thoughts (as revolutionary ideologies) that were alien to the average person in the Iranian society. Iranian intellectuals were indeed familiar with Western schools of thought, but the rest of the nation, the masses did not have any exposure to foreign revolutionary ideologies. This was a major issue that had preoccupied Shari'ati's mind when he was deciding to publish either the translation of Sartre's book Being and Nothingness, or the book that he eventually translated and published about the life and character of Abuzar. This was a crucial decision and one of the most important decisions that Shari'ati had to confront. Nevertheless, once, he made up his mind, the road was paved and he knew what direction he was going to adopt for his

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<sup>4</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Haz-Gasht, [Return] (Tehran: Hoseiniyeh Ershad, n.d.), p. 301.

future. He chose to publish Abuzar. Five consecutive editions followed and at least one hundred thousand people must have read it according to Shari'ati's own estimation.<sup>7</sup> Why? Shari'ati explained:

Abuzar was the Prophet's companion and a disciple of Imam Ali, he was a pious man and admired throughout the Muslim community for his integrity and the principles which he stood for....Who was Abuzar? A great revolutionary who was anti-aristocracy, anti-dictatorship, anti-capitalism, anti-poverty and anti-discrimination.<sup>8</sup>

One of the central and essential themes of the above book was a statement made by Abuzar that Shari'ati analyzed with enthusiasm and political implications. It was by assertions like this that Abuzar had become anti-aristocracy and anti-establishment, "I am stunned at someone who does not find a loaf of bread in his house and yet does not rebel with his naked sword against all of the people."<sup>9</sup> After the death of the Prophet, Abuzar was still a devout believer of the true Islam and could not tolerate oppression and exploitation of any kind. He preached the idealistic notions of Islam against those fabricated notions that the political establishment was advocating for its own interests and exploitation of the masses.

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<sup>7</sup>Haz-Gasht, p. 307.

<sup>8</sup>Haz-Gasht, pp. 307-308.

<sup>9</sup>Haz-Gasht, p. 308.

Shari'ati, knowing the psychology of the people in Iran, was certain that the words of Abuzar would relay the message contained in his book to the masses. Which message was Shari'ati referring to? That Abuzar was a revolutionary individual. In other words, he chose to write about Abuzar, not because he was an outstanding religious figure, but because of Abuzar's anti-establishment activities against an establishment which was corrupt.

With a sociological outlook, and as an expert on the socio-cultural history of Shi'ism, Shari'ati had reached the conclusion that Shi'ism was the best revolution where Sufis held their meetings) to give them sermons about life after death, monotheism, asceticism and philosophical analogies. This resembles telling a group of people in desert who are dying from thirst, a romantic story, or Holy wars in Ireland.<sup>10</sup>

The second choice, would be forgetting about myself and find out first of all, in what way I can communicate with my people, wrote Shari'ati. How can I communicate with them and speak their language. Then, what should I tell them, and how should I tell them, so that they would listen to me and accept my words, without offending and estranging their

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<sup>10</sup>Baz-Qasht, p. 303.

culture and faith.<sup>11</sup> It is here, that as a Roshan-Fekr, Shari'ati was different from other Roshan-Fekran, and he could apply his knowledge of Western sociology to the social settings of Iran. He believed that in order to enlighten and nurture a person or a group, first, the means of communication must be learned and established. Then, the culture and personality must be identified. Shari'ati used the city of Mashhad as a sociological study to apply the above questions to. The conclusion and the answer for Shari'ati was, religion. How? The Shi'ite society, according to Shari'ati, is a party and an organizationally oriented entity, where under the pretext of religion, people hold daily, weekly and monthly sessions and meetings. In these meetings, ideological principles and elements are constantly reinforced. The social network of the Shi'ite society is like the plumbing of a city that can be easily polluted or purified. If the Roshan-Fekr somehow penetrates this religious network, he would be able to have his message heard in all corners of the society as well as among all strata.<sup>12</sup>

A second assumption is that Shari'ati was well aware that both these groups had strong political bases and support among the middle class and the intelligentsia (Abrahamian, 1982) and that the participation of the lower stratum in

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<sup>11</sup>Baz-Gasht, pp. 302-304.

<sup>12</sup>Baz-Gasht, pp. 305-306.

these parties was very limited. On the other hand, Shi'ism had a very strong appeal to the lower classes and all that Shari'ati, with the aid of his sociological training needed to do was to penetrate into this network to give a new direction and orientation to Shi'ism. In other words, he attempted to politicize, revitalize and reform the religious doctrine from its passive role among the masses to an active and dynamic religion. Furthermore, Shari'ati believed that Shi'ism could also have the same appeal to the intelligentsia, and in order to appreciate the revolutionary nature of Shi'ism, all they had to do was to study and understand it in the perspective which Shari'ati was interpreting it. The reason why Shi'ism had not appealed to the intelligentsia and the intellectuals was not in that Shi'ism lacked any political and social potential, but because it was simply ignored and underrated by this class of the society just because it happened to be a religious doctrine.<sup>12</sup>

It seems that Shari'ati's underlying commitment was to construct such a political ideology that would serve as an umbrella covering all classes of people. This ideology would eliminate the gap between the intellectuals and the masses. For the intellectuals, Shi'ism could have a revolu-

<sup>12</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Shi'eh [Shi'ite] (Tehran: Hosciniyeh Ershad, n. d.), p. 17.

tionary appeal, and for the masses it could have a religious appeal. The intellectuals who followed various political ideologies could also all be drawn under the cover of Shi'ism. The mobilization of the masses and the leadership of the Reshah-fekran will then possess one mutual means and of course one mutual end (overthrow of the unjust rule of the Shah). The role of ideology was so important for Shari'ati that he wrote: "We can not devise and contrive ourselves unless we have an ideology"<sup>14</sup>, and his argument, in Ershad and in his writings, was that Shi'ism was the ideology best capable to meet the cultural norms and values of Iranian society and that it was also a perfect political party.

Another factor to be considered is that the regime, after the events that took place during the decade (1953-1963), demonstrated no tolerance for any political activity. At the same time, religious underground organizations, like the Mujahedeen, were condemned as being Marxists or Islamic Marxists, indicating that the regime was not even tolerant towards religious organizations involved in politics, if they were oppositional. This is probably why Shari'ati chose the strategy that made him a stranger to guerrilla

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<sup>14</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Khod-Sazi-ye Enghelabi (Revolutionary Self-Construction); (Hoseiniyeh Ershad, n. d., most likely published in Iran), p. 138.

fighters on the surface and in the eyes of the regime, and yet he was their admired leader. How did this occur?

Underground organizations were indeed limited by material, geographical and the recruiting obstacles. The size and extent of their activities were also limited, whereas Shari'ati was able to spread his message across the country to thousands and thousands of people in a mere span of five years while in Ershad. Indeed he educated and recruited the largest number of participants, only he left them to be organized and led by the guerrilla organizations in all those years, one phase of which happened to be the marches and demonstrations of the 1979 Revolution. Had he joined a clandestine organization instead, his contacts, and thus, influence, would have been on a much smaller scale, and certainly would not have been as decisive and fatal to the Shah's regime. His active role in Ershad kept him close to the masses. He travelled across the country and was heard in numerous college campuses, and also maintained close contacts with the leading intellectuals of the country, exchanging ideas and receiving feedback on the methods and content of his works and lectures. This statement which was made by Shari'ati's father at the commemoration of the 40th day of his martyrdom, illustrates the impact that Shari'ati had on his audience as a speaker:

There were some people who were communists, who after attending a few of his (Shari'ati's) lec-



tures on Shi'ism and founders of Shi'ism, would come and confess to Shari'ati that: "before accepting Islam, we accept and believe your Shi'ism." This shows how deeply they were effected.<sup>18</sup>

What was the force behind Shari'ati that kept his audience attending his lectures night after night, listening to the tapes of his lectures and reading his writings so enthusiastically? It was of course Shi'ism, but a new and a dynamic interpretation of Shi'ism, a Shi'ism that impressed the masses as an ideology, an ideology that could and was meant to serve a purpose, a political purpose. This ideology was something that was missing in 1963, and despite Ayatollah Khomeini's criticism and one man war against the Shah, there was no unifying ideology among the masses. The 1963 insurgence was an outbreak from the quietism of the religion that had prevailed for some time in Iran. Four years later Shari'ati came to Ershad to declare that outburst was no aberration, but that it marked a new era of a reformed and revived Shi'ism, a Shi'ism which was not just a passive religious doctrine, but a dynamic revolutionary force.

<sup>18</sup>Maktab-e Mobarez (Tehran: A Journal Published by the Union of Islamic Students Association in Europe, United States & Canada, No 23. n. d.), p. 18.

### **Shari'ati's Interpretations of Shi'ism**

In order to present Shi'ism as a legitimate political ideology and as a revolutionary doctrine, Shari'ati had to employ a number of sources. He had to acquire knowledge of the Qur'anic text, he had to be well informed about Islamic history, and he also needed to recognize and acknowledge the works of earlier reformers such as Seyyid Jamal ad-Din and Eqbal. A genuine sense and realization of the needs and attitudes of the masses in Iran and other third world countries could enable him to utilize his training in sociology to revise, arrange and synthesize the above mentioned elements into a revolutionary ideology. In doing so, Shari'ati studied and presented Shi'ism from various angles and in various contexts. The synthesis of all these proved to be instrumental and crucial in the shape and content that Shari'ati was trying to cast and implement in Shi'ism. Undoubtedly the most significant element that Shari'ati was trying to incorporate in his new interpretation of Shi'ism, was the issue of justice and just rule in society. It was the immense responsibility of every Shi'ite to strive for justice in society and struggle against oppression, preached Shari'ati time after time. The issue of justice was a central theme in Shari'ati's approach to Shi'ism. His depic-

tion of the incident of Karbala was to be the guideline for every Muslim in his or her strivings for justice. If this element of justice was so important and central to Shi'ite doctrine, why then were Muslims in Iran living under the most oppressive conditions! The answer, according to Shari'ati, lay in the kind of Shi'ism that was being practiced by Muslims. It was a fabricated and superficial adoption of Shi'ism that was officially endorsed by the Safavids (1501), and which had been in practice even before as well as after the Safavid accession to power. This brand of untrue Shi'ism was called "Safavid" Shi'ism by Shari'ati, to contrast with his reinterpreted and dynamic adaptation which he called "Alavid" Shi'ism.

Before discussing Karbala and the two opinions of Shi'ism, still one more topic that was considered to be significant in Islamic history by Shari'ati needs to be discussed here in order to appreciate the consequent issues, and that is the issue of succession of the Prophet.

### **Saqifa**

Shari'ati's model of a just society was the society in which Imam Ali ruled as a Caliph in 656 A.D.. He succeeded three other caliphs who ruled the Islamic community after the death of The Prophet Mohammed. The events which took

place in these years, leading to the martyrdom of Imam Hosein, Imam Ali's second son and the third Imam, were crucial for Islam as well as for Shari'ati's formulation and interpretation of Shi'ism. Referring to this period, Fazlur Rahman wrote:

Indeed the germs of all the subsequent major developments in Islam, involving moral and spiritual issues are traceable to this very early period in the history of Muslim community after the death of the Prophet.<sup>16</sup>

The inevitable disputes over the succession of the Prophet took place in Saqifa, which was an old social gathering place in Medina. According to Nashkoor, the Muslim community was divided into four groups over the issue of succession.<sup>17</sup> The major dispute, however, was between the Ansar who were from Medina and Muhajirun who were from Mecca. The Ansar were broken into two rival groups: Banu Aws and Banu Khazraj. The main constituents of Muhajirun were from the Quraysh tribe, from which the Prophet himself came. At Saqifa, during the disputes over the succession of the Prophet, the Ansar tribes could not reach an agreement

<sup>16</sup>Fazlur Rahman, "Revival and Reform in Islam," in P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, eds., The Cambridge History of Islam, vol. 2, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970) pp. 632-656

<sup>17</sup>Mohammad J. Nashkoor, Tarikh-e Shi'eh va Fargheh ha-ye Eslam [History of Shi'ism and Islamic Factions], (Tehran: Eshraghi Publications, n. d.), pp. 2-20.

amongst themselves, thus, leaving the door open for Abu Bakr from Muhajirun to be appointed as the successor to the Prophet. While these disputes were taking place at Saqifa, the Prophet's son-in-law, other members of the household of the Prophet and a number of loyal and pious members of the community were involved in the burial ceremony of the Prophet.

While various historians have written numerous accounts about Saqifa (Ibn Sa'd, (born 168/784-5), Baladhuri (died 279/892-3), and al-Yagubi (died 284/897-8)), Shari'ati suggested a unique explanation for Saqifa and concluded that Saqifa was a socioeconomic clash in the Muslim community which led to the victory of the Arab aristocracy. There seems to be a similarity between Shari'ati's point of view and what Max Weber had written earlier on the issue of charismatic leadership and the problem of succession.

The process of routinization of charisma is in very important respects identical with adaptation to the conditions of the economy, since this is the principal continually operating force in every day life.<sup>10</sup>

Even though there was a minority of participants at Saqifa who firmly believed that the succession of the Prophet belonged to an individual from his household,

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<sup>10</sup>Max Weber, Economy and Society, G. Roth and Claus Wittich, eds., (Bedminster Press, New York, 1968), p. 254.

nevertheless the economic forces finally determined the outcome of Saqifa (al-Ya'gubi). A small group of Muslims contested the decision arrived at in Saqifa and insisted that Imam Ali was the legitimate successor to the Prophet.<sup>19</sup> One of the arguments of this group was the ceremony which occurred in Ghadir Khumm. They claimed that The Prophet chose Ali as his successor before the vast crowd that was accompanying him on his return to Medina from his last pilgrimage to Mecca, at Ghadir Khumm. These Muslims, called Shi'ites ("partisans" of Imam Ali) attempted to force the Imam to wage a war against those responsible for the outcome of Saqifa, but the Imam refused to endanger the unity of the newly established community with civil war. Those Muslims who believed Abu Bakr to be the rightful successor of the Prophet became to be known as Sunnis. A major theological distinction between the two was on the belief of Shi'ites in the infallibility of the Imams which automatically disqualified those outside of the household of the Prophet. Shi'ites believed that succession from outside of the household of the Prophet could mislead and misdirect the young Muslim community.

Three caliphs ruled the Islamic community for a period of 25 years before Imam Ali became the fourth caliph of the

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<sup>19</sup>For further study of this subject, see Shari'ati's Selection and/or Election trans. Asghar Ghassemi, (Houston, Texas: Book Distribution Center, 1980).

Muslims. In this period, there had been a deep divergence from the Islamic values set by the Prophet.

It was also during the period of the rule of the second caliph that new social and economic forces led to the uneven distribution of the public treasury (bayt al-mal) among the people, an act which was later the cause of bewildering class differences and frightful and bloody struggles among Muslims.<sup>80</sup>

Injustice, tyranny and oppression became the norm rather than the exception and this gave rise to public discontent and uprisings. The second and the third caliphs were assassinated in the wake of such uprisings.

#### **Imam Ali: Symbol of a Just Ruler**

When Imam Ali began his caliphate in 656, his only intention was to reestablish the just society that was once in existence during the Prophesy of the Holy Prophet. In an attempt to bring social and political affairs to their ideal conditions under the Prophet, Imam Ali had no choice but to undertake major changes among the officialdom of the Muslim community. Changing the life style of the government rulers of the vast empire of Islam, and the method of public

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<sup>80</sup>Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, Shi'ite Islam, trans. Seyyid Hossein Nasr, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), p. 46.

affairs, was a chivalrous task that under the circumstances of the day could be called "revolutionary."<sup>21</sup> Imam Ali's method of just and pious rule soon created a number of dissidents whose interests were jeopardized and threatened by the Imam's caliphate. The length of the caliphate of the Imam was four years and nine months before he fell victim to assassination and became the first martyr of the faith of martyrdom, Shi'ism (Shari'ati). The "meaningful and ordered totality" that Weber identified as "religious conception" was embodied in the just society that Imam Ali attempted to establish. As it was pointed out earlier, just rule and just society became the central theme of Shi'ism and its followers suspected the temporal rule of any person outside the family of the Prophet.

Alavid Shi'ism concentrates on the political aspects of Imam Ali's rule, his struggle against tyranny, deception and corruption (Shari'ati 1972), and by having established a basis of comparison between a just and tyrannical government which was beginning to take shape under the Umayyids, Shari'ati was able to develop a political ideology committed to establishing a just society.

Efforts at establishing a just society for the Islamic community were followed by Imam Hassan, the eldest son of the martyred Imam Ali. His mission, however, was inter-

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 50.



rupted by the governor of Syria, Mu'awiya who waged a war against Imam Hassan, claiming the Caliphate for himself. A peace treaty was to be signed calling for the resignation of the Imam under the condition that he would be the caliph after Mu'awiya.

The 20 year caliphate of Mu'awiya, which began in the year 40/661, proved to be the most oppressive period for the Shi'ites (Tabataba'i 1975). The late Imam Ali was cursed, slandered and offended in mosques and public centers. About 12,000 Shi'ites were estimated to be in jails for heresy and many were executed for the same offense. In Iraq, the punishment for being a Shi'ite was so severe that some of the partisans of Imam Ali dissimulated to be pagans.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, to secure the Caliphate for his family, Mu'awiya took part in instigations against the Imam which eventually led to the poisoning of Imam Hassan. Mu'awiya's son, Yazid became the next caliph (60/681).

### Karbela

By reviewing Saqifa, Shari'ati gave a dialectical interpretation to early developments in the Islamic society. The appearance of a palace caliphate based on tyranny and cor-

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<sup>22</sup>Montgomery Watt, The Formative Period of Islam (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973).

ruption was the thesis, and the moral and spiritual tendencies led by the household of the Prophet was the anti-thesis. This interpretation of Shari'ati is identical to Weber's ethic of world rejection and ethic of physical pleasure, a dichotomy which he believed had taken place at the time of the migration, Hijra, from Mecca to Medina (A.D. 622). Fazlur Rahman rightfully refers to this development as a "protest phenomenon" against the social and political conditions, as well as the "suppressive attitudes of the ascendant Arabs."<sup>23</sup> The zenith of this protest against the Umayyad caliphs, who according to the Shi'ites had betrayed moral and humanitarian principles of Islam, occurred in Karbela with the massacre of the grand son of the Prophet, Imam Hosein (the second son of Imam Ali), in the month of Muharram in the year 61/680. The ambush was the result of the Imam's refusal to pay allegiance to the Umayyad caliph since his immoral, corrupt and debaucherous rule and character was known throughout the Muslim community. It was caliph Yazid who instructed his governor in Medina to either convince the Imam to pay allegiance to the Umayyad ruler or have his head sent to the caliph.<sup>24</sup> Submitting to the demand of the caliph would have meant the approval of his character and rule, therefore the Imam called on his followers to prepare

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<sup>23</sup>Fazlur Rahman, p. 632.

<sup>24</sup>Allama Tabataba'i, p. 197.

for defense despite having been heavily outnumbered by the Umayyad army.

This day of the Muharram is still commemorated by the Shi'ites in Iran and around the world, and it suggests a resemblance to the portrayal of the stations of the cross in some Christian countries.

This incident (Karbela) is indeed commemorated and across the country there are passion plays to depict the heroic death that the Imam and his followers suffered. After Shi'ite Islam was established as the official religion in Persia by the Safavids in the sixteenth century, these annual ceremonies, from which the Ta'ziyeh theater evolved,<sup>25</sup> received royal patronage. The religious leaders and the Ulama have spoken and preached about the moral lessons to be learned by the champions of Muharram in Karbela. All these commemorations, preaching and passion plays were accepted in a passive manner and did not serve any purpose, according to Shari'ati. The blood of the Imam was a symbol of protest against the oppression of corrupt rulers, a protest (more than a symbol) that had to be kept alive throughout the Shi'ite lands in a permanent flow.<sup>26</sup> It served a purpose then and should do the same now.

<sup>25</sup>Peter J. Chelkowski, "Introduction", Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran, Peter J. Chelkowski, ed., (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p.xvi.

<sup>26</sup>Shi'eh, p. 141.

To give Karbela a dynamic essence and an active role among the masses, Shari'ati analyzed the sociological manifestation of Karbela from two perspectives. His first paradigm was that Karbela should not be looked upon as a tragic incident to grieve over as had been the case. It is not an incident whose purpose was to cause passion plays and sad moments. Rather it is a school, an ideology, a university. It is not a grave yard, but a source of civilization. It is a history filled with blossoms, life, love, responsibility, awareness and chivalry, said Shari'ati.<sup>27</sup> And finally, there is this lesson to be drawn from Karbela: a true Muslim (Shi'ite) can not and should not tolerate injustice and oppression. Shari'ati's audience and readers were mostly high school and college students who did not have any difficulty grasping the essence of Shari'ati's message and inquiry.

The majority of those following Shari'ati were, more or less, dissidents of the regime and did not have any doubts about the unjust and oppressive nature of the regime. Now, all they were obligated to do was to convert themselves to true Muslims and follow the footsteps of the genuine Shi'ites of Karbela.

<sup>27</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Ishayyo-eh Alavi va Iashayyo-eh Safavi [Alavid Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism] (Tehran: Student Library of the College of Literature and Humanities, 1973), p. 155.

The second dilemma that Shari'ati faced was the approach and treatment that Karbela was receiving by the masses and the religious leaders. All they did was commemorate the incident and weep for it and this attitude toward Karbela did not solve anything and had no practical value. Thus, Shari'ati called on the religious leaders to treat Karbela with a different outlook, so that it could help serve a purpose, because that is solely what Imam Hosein had in mind, i.e. to serve a purpose, to show the world that in his faith there is no tolerance for injustice and oppression.

#### **Alavid and Safavid Shi'isms**

The attitude of the religious leaders, maintaining a passive attitude to Shi'ism, was the result of misinterpretation and fabrication of the faith, according to Shari'ati. This approach to Shi'ism had prevailed since the incident of Saqifa, the initial conflict over succession to the Prophet. The Safavids who ruled Iran from 1501, practiced fabricated Shi'ism masterfully, said Shari'ati. By studying Shari'ati's analysis of the 16th century society of Iran, especially the role of the royal palace in regard to religion and the religious class, one would notice some similarities to the 20th century society of Iran!

When the Safavid Dynasty took over Iran, the majority of the population was Sunni. Shah Isma'il, however, declared

Shi'ism to be the official religion of the Dynasty's domain. In order to secure the legitimacy of their rule, Shi'ite clergymen were called upon from various lands to assist the Safavids. They were requested to confirm the Dynasty's claim that they had descended from the household of the Prophet. Thus, the religious class became an integral part of the ruling class and a caesaropapist dynasty came to dominate Persian lands and develop into a strong political establishment overshadowing the Ottoman Empire. Shi'ism was employed in the service of political ambitions of the Safavids.

While the eastern lands were undergoing the unification of mosque and the state (the Ottomans with Sunnism and the Safavids with Shi'ism), western lands were undergoing the Reformation and Europe was the center of debate and wars for the ascendancy of the nation over church, local church over the papacy, and individual interpretation of scripture over church dogma as determined by Pope and councils.

#### **The Role of the Clergy Under the Safavids**

The clergy in the 16th century society of Iran had, according to Shari'ati, two contradictory functions to serve: On the one hand, the religious leaders had to preach and propagate Shi'ism in order to establish a base among the

populace and also make it an instrument of seclusion from the rest of the Muslim lands.

On the other hand, the same religious leaders were to make sure that they would paralyze Shi'ism and mesmerize the minds and souls of the masses.<sup>88</sup> Their power, prestige and status within the Persian society enabled them to achieve these ends. This created a dual contradiction in the Safavid society. The dynasty needed Islam and Shi'ism both as its base to depend on, and at the same time had to employ the clergy to fabricate new teachings and principles of the faith. They began by separating religion from politics and changing the outward element of the religion to an inward practice. They converted socially and politically active Muslims into passive, individualist gnostics concerned for the purity of their souls and their own salvation rather than that of the society and community, according to Shari'ati.<sup>89</sup>

The clergies who are dependent on the ruling class have a general formula for fabrication and paralyzing the true spirits of religions: they present misleading and negative interpretations of religious principles.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Tashayy-e Ahl-e Bayt, p. 143.

<sup>89</sup> Tashayy-e Ahl-e Bayt, p. 158.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

Shari'ati believed that every religion has positive and constructive elements which emphasize dynamic, social responsibilities, as well as negative elements which the government sponsored clergy attempts to preach, substituting the latter elements for the former.

The Safavids also had two expectations from religion: not only were the clergy to preach in favor of the status quo, legitimizing their monarchy, but Shi'ism was to create an offensive force, converting the masses into an avenging force to be used against the Ottomans and their Sunni faith.<sup>31</sup> The magic of the Safavids was that they directed all the emotions and passions of Karbela to their political rivals, the Ottomans. They masterfully capitalized on the "protest Phenomenon" of Shi'ism toward their political rivals instead of allowing it to be a threat to themselves. And all that the masses did in Muharram was to mourn for the champions of Karbela, instead of following in their footsteps. The Safavids converted the "Red Shi'ism," which was based on the two principles of Justice and Imamate, to "Black Shi'ism," which was a "Mantle" of "Death" that the Safavids wore as a symbol of "Mourning."<sup>32</sup>

The contradictions in the Safavid society continued, and the greatest skill of the Safavid clergy that came to their

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 158-159.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 162-3.



aid, was in substituting for the "knowledge" of the Imam, a "passion" for the Imam. The clergy had to make sure that the masses would constantly be preoccupied with the name and worship of the Imam without understanding the meaning or substance of his mission. Religion, thus, served the Safavid Dynasty as an opiate for the masses, in the Marxist terminology which Shari'ati used quite frequently.

In Safavid society the highest office of the religious class was that of "Sadr," which was completely different from its counterparts in other Muslim societies. In other states, the Sadr's occupation was restricted to religious matters, dogma and rituals. In Persia however, the position of Sadr was linked to administrative responsibilities and the distribution of the state's financial budget to religious centers. The position of the Sadr was appointed by the Safavid rulers, as were the hierarchy of the religious institutions.

In each city, "shaykh al-Islam" was the chief religious dignitary and the "pish-namaz" (prayer leader) of each mosque was also an appointed position.<sup>22</sup> It was Al-Karai, the self designated deputy of the Imam, who ruled in favor of the permissibility of receiving salaries from "tyrannical

<sup>22</sup>Said Amir Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 129.

rulers" to assure the involvement of the clergy in political affairs.<sup>24</sup>

Shari'ati believed that as soon as the religious leaders changed their position from being amongst the masses to being amongst the rulers, everything changed. When they were amongst the masses, they were considered a constant threat to the corrupt political establishments. However, this was not true during the Safavid reign.<sup>25</sup>

A serious distinction was brought up by Shari'ati between the Ulama of the Shi'ites and those of the Sunnis. The Shi'ite religious leaders are free from any social and financial ties and obligation. They are not linked to the government nor to any other governmental institutions, but are free and independent individuals whose economic support comes from the masses of the people (except under the Safavids). In this, they resembled the Puritan clergy in England who were free from any ties to the feudal system and functioned as an independent social force in the seventeenth century.<sup>26</sup> Thus, people were the source of their economic and social standing. But, the Ulama in the Sunni states derive their status and salaries from the state. Such Ulama

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>25</sup>Tashayyo-eh Alavi...., pp. 218-19.

<sup>26</sup>Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints (Boston: Harvard University Press), p. 114.

were inevitably part of the state apparatus, but the Shi'ite Ulama were amongst the masses as their spiritual leaders. There has always been a reciprocal relationship between them and the masses. Financially, they have been supported (via the religious taxes-Khoms and Zakat) by the masses who in turn rely on the Ulama for spiritual and religious guidance. Ideally, as many of them have been, the Shi'ite Ulama have restricted themselves to piety and righteousness, otherwise they will perish. Thus, piety and constant clash with the regime have become two of the outstanding traits of the Shi'ite Ulama.<sup>27</sup>

### **Sociology of the Mosque**

In Islam, the mosque is a symbol of class equality and unity. It overshadowed all the class and social privileges and contradictions, and stressed equality, brotherhood and negation of individualism. The Prophet had designed and structured the whole community of Muslims, as well as his personal life, in and around the mosque. The mosque during the life of the Prophet was a three-dimensional house: it was a chapel, a school and a free parliament for the people. The mosque was a place for prayers, a center for theological and scientific learning and a place where social and political

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

cal debates" took place. The mosque was a house for the people where they could come and say what they wished. Thus, the mosque was the house of the people as well as of God, argued Shari'ati. Following any social or political event, the people found their way into the mosque and as a result, the mosque became the center for protests and movements. The subsequent reaction of governments was to deactivate and inhibit this role of the mosque, and since they could not close the mosques, they stripped from it its potentials and responsibilities. The Safavids built "Khang-hahs" (where sufis resided and performed their rituals) and tried to overwhelm and undermine the role of the mosque. At the same time, in order to convince the masses about their own devotion to religion, architectural designs and ornamental developments continued, making the mosques look like castles. But these castles held only prayers and there was no mention of social and political debates as before.<sup>22</sup>

Under the Pahlavi Shahs, there was a consistent attempt to make the mosque just a place to practice the daily prayers. The reaction of the Ulama was to insist on holding if not daily, at least, occasional sermons after prayers. The topics and reasons for such sermons were religious on the surface, but could change its tone to political and social issues of the day. Usually, an Ayatollah would be

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 214-217.

assigned to a certain mosque where he would hold his daily and nightly prayers. Depending on the interest, popularity and will of the Ayatollah (also called the Pish-Namaz) he could give sermons on different topics. This was the case with Ayatollah Taleghani at the Hedayat mosque, where he gave most of his sermons whenever he was out of prison. Sometimes, he could be out of the prison, but with a warning to stay away from sermons. As was the case, he would violate SAVAK warnings and end up in jail to be tortured time after time. Ayatollah Taleghani was the perfect example of the group of Ulama or the Imams (chapter 5) that Shari'ati spoke of. Camilo Torres would fall under this category. Though Christian in faith, he lived a life of a revolutionary leader, one believing that "the duty of every Catholic is to be a revolutionary... and a Catholic who was not a revolutionary was living in mortal sin."<sup>37</sup>

#### **Implications of the Safavid Society for Shari'ati**

As an expert and loyal student of Gurvitch and his sociology, Shari'ati had suspected some degree of resemblance between the 16th century society of the Safavids and

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<sup>37</sup>John Gerassi, ed., Revolutionary Priest, The Complete Writings and Messages of Camilo Torres (New York: Random House, 1971).

the 20th century society of the Pahlavis. Indeed, the resemblance was quite considerable in the "clergy-state" relationship between the two societies. There were at least two reasons that could have forced Shari'ati to use the Safavid society as his frame of reference. First, he had to convince his audience that there was more to a true Shi'ism than what they were witnessing in Iran. The second reason was that given the repressive condition of the time, it was less troublesome to direct his criticism and attack toward the Safavids and not the Pahlavis. Thus, he could condemn and criticize Safavid fabrication of the religion and offer his own unbiased interpretation of what he called "the True Shi'ism." In doing so, he also condemned the Safavid Ulama, who had significant similarities with the Pahlavi Ulama. It is true that under the Pahlavis, Ulama enjoyed more independence and the majority of the religious centers had no ties to the government, nevertheless, majority of them they had a quietist attitude toward the regime, which was reason enough for Shari'ati to condemn them.

This is one of the instances where Shari'ati makes a comparative inference between the Safavid ruler and clergy with those of the Pahlavi:

It is true that this ruler is debaucher, it is true that we see in the same Alighapous (famous Safavid palace in Esfehan) that like houses of the caliphs of Baghdad have collections of wines and musical instruments; it is true that the Safavid

Sultan like the Abbassid caliph of Baghdad belongs to all groups .... When we see a famous Shi'ite clergy who is a pious theologian and a source of pride for us, happens to cooperate with him (the ruler), the religious masses will accept and tolerate this....<sup>40</sup>

Since the regime had no objection to Shari'ati's criticism of the clergy, he took the liberty of launching a serious attack and criticism against the clergy and their role in the Pahlavi society. He used the popular term "Rohani" (clerical member) to refer to the religious leaders in general as a new class of clergy that had the support and approval of the regime. The ruling class itself was eager to develop and expand this "Rohani" class, against the Shi'ite Ulama who were the responsible and educated religious leaders. Since the Rohani had no intellectual background, it was easier for the illiterate class of the people to identify and associate with them. Shari'ati described them in this manner:

This gentleman is a "Rohani"! What does that mean? What is his use? Is he an Islamic intellectual? No! Is he an author or a translator? No! Then what is he? He is a source of "light," he is "divine," he is a "religious personality," he is the "honor of the religion."....<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>41</sup>Ali Shari'ati, Shi'eh, p. ...

According to Shari'ati such a Rohani equalled to a useless entity. Shari'ati distinctly warned the intelligentsia not to consider the preaching and affairs of this Rohani class as an example and representative of the teachings of true Islam and of Shi'ism in particular. These are the official Rohaniyun (plural) of the Safavid Shi'ism, said Shari'ati.<sup>48</sup> The Rohani class on the other hand was not silent and there was a widespread attack on Shari'ati across the country accusing him of being a heretic, in his case possibly a Sunni. Shari'ati believed that this criticism of his message and interpretation was the result of lack of information, understanding and at times misinformation on the part of the Rohani who had the support of their naive and uneducated audience:

I was walking down the street one day in Mashhad and I heard my name and my book being mentioned in anger from a lekkiye's loud speaker (a place where religious ceremonies and passion plays are held). As I entered the place I realized the audience was the type of audience where there was no chance of even one of them knowing me....<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, there were those Ulama, like the popular Ayatollah Taleghani, who understanding the content and mission that Shari'ati had undertaken, had nothing but praise and blessing for him.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 295-96.



Finally, by disclosing the social and political atmosphere of 16th century Iran, Shari'ati was able to work out an ideology based on politicization of Shi'ism which in its process required some crucial issues to be brought up:

- a. Shi'ism as a faith and as an ideology is the guardian of justice in society and can not be incorporated to the service of oppressive governments as was the case with the Safavids.
- b. The Ulama should reconsider their role and mission in society by first preaching the true and dynamic aspects of Shi'ism, instead of preaching the passive and superficial elements of the religion. Then, the Ulama should not be a partner and protector of the regime like the Safavid clergy were, but follow the path of the true Imams by constantly preaching against oppression and tyranny.
- c. By re-examining the role of the mosque in the Islamic community, Shari'ati was, in fact, calling for more participation on political and social issues from the masses, as well as from the Ulama.

#### **Implications of Karbela for Shari'ati**

It was mentioned previously how Shari'ati believed that the incident of Karbela deserved a more sophisticated and practical approach. However, there was a more delicate element behind his reinterpretation of Karbela.

In its efforts to keep the masses under absolute control politically, the regime had undertaken one unique propaganda among its many volatile tactics. It had spread the word around the country that the number of SAVAK agents spying for the regime was so high that there was just no escape for

the masses to risk criticizing the royal family or the government. Their number was assumed to be so high that any person would be foolish to risk his life by mentioning anything unfavorable about the regime. Thus, there was believed to be neither hope nor use, in challenging the mighty power of the regime that possessed one of the strongest and most modern armies in the world. This was the mentality that the Shah and his forces had determined convey to the masses, and obviously they were very successful.

Then came Shari'ati, with his interpretations of Shi'ite dogma and of the incident of Karbela, posing the ultimate question of whether a true devout Shi'ite should or could tolerate injustice by an oppressive ruler. Unlike some Christians' belief which held that a king's cruelty might be God's way of punishing the sins of people; and unlike Luther, who proposed that there were only two reasons grave enough to merit opposition to one's prince,<sup>44</sup> Shari'ati declared:

Anytime that there is unjust blood spilled in a corner of the universe, the hands of all those who have chosen to be silent, are colorful (sinful).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Altman Swihart, Luther and the Lutheran Church (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960), pp. 165-6.

<sup>45</sup>Shi'eh, p. 66.

In the pilgrimage that the Shi'ites make to the shrine of Imam Hosein, these prayers are said:

God's condemnation be to those who murdered you;  
to those who tortured you and to those who heard  
this tragedy and did not protest, and approved it  
by their silence."<sup>4</sup>

Thus, It is a moral and religious obligation, according to Shari'ati, to stand up against all the odds and protest against injustice and oppression.

Shari'ati repeatedly reminded his audience about martyrdom in Karbela to illustrate that Alavid Shi'ism was a religion of protest, and Karbala was a classic example of protest in Shi'ite tradition. Shari'ati's challenge was, thus, to apply the social setting of the year of 680 to 1970 to accomplish the same moral and political ends. To him, the nature and essence of oppression and tyranny are the same, the time distance should not make any difference in Muslims' reaction. Therefore, in the same way that devout and true Muslims assisted their Imam in his protest against oppression, an identical attitude was expected from Muslims in 1970.

The Shah's regime would not tolerate any direct reference and comparison between caliph Yazid and himself, but, the inference was quite obvious in the minds of the audience.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

The similarity between oppressive rule of the Pahlavi regime and that of the Umayyids was something that Shari'ati needed not to stress, since majority of those attending Shari'ati's lectures or reading his writings were well aware of the torture chambers of the SAVAK.

### Summary

Shari'ati believed Shi'ism to be an ideal and perfect ideology, because it possessed all the elements and constituents that he sought in a revolutionary ideology compatible with the culture of the masses in Iran. The structure of this "perfect political and social party" would be as the following:

1. "Imam Ali" is the model of a "just ruler", who lived among the oppressed and was their guardian and spiritual leader.<sup>47</sup>
2. "The Islamic Community" that existed during the life of the Prophet, which Imam Ali tried to restore after the rule of the three caliphs, would be the model of a "just society."
3. "Imam Hussein" is the model of an "ideal Shi'ite leader" who did not bow and give in to a tyrannic ruler. His determination and absolute stand against oppression must be a model for all those who wish to lead the Islamic community. By so saying, Shari'ati condemned the religious leaders (Rohaniyun) in Iran who had a quietist attitude toward the political establishment.

<sup>47</sup>Syed Mohammed Jafery, Najul Balagha (Poona, India: Fine Art Printing Press, 1967).

Finally, Karbela is the answer to the mighty power of the corrupt rulers whose strengths are believed to be unchallengeable. Thus, he called on the Iranians to protest against their oppressive ruler regardless of the odds.

All the above elements offered Shi'ism a more political nature, as well as a more dynamic role in the society which could reveal, that Shari'ati was perhaps trying to use religion as a means for social and political freedom in Iran. His life long political activities verify the fact that he was indeed a bold opponent of the Shah and his regime. However, Shari'ati also did have faith in Shi'ism as a religion. It just happened that he discovered that this particular religion could be transformed into a revolutionary ideology, and from then on he focused his attention and efforts in this direction. In his attempt to reformulate Shi'ism, he tried to present Shi'ism in a more progressive and sociological context. Then, not only the masses of the people and their practice of Shi'ism would have fallen under Shari'ati's criticism, but the religious establishment, which was preaching and identifying with Safavid manner of Shi'ism, also fell victim to Shari'ati's analytical criticism.

Shari'ati also believed that the current practice of Shi'ism was not compatible with the principles set by the founders of the religion. He believed that the current practice of Shi'ism was:

- a. meaningless and did not serve any purpose.
- b. passive and quietist and in total contrast with the true and genuine concept of the faith which was an active and dynamic Shi'ism.
- c. not a movement, but an institution.

By analyzing the social and political environment of sixteenth century Iran, Shari'ati suggested how the Safavids had

succeeded in establishing a religious institution and then incorporated that into their political apparatus to achieve their political goals.

Comparative analysis was widely used by Shari'ati in his interpretations and discussions throughout his works. Comparing the clergy under the Pahlavi regime, and accusing them of being bought and being supportive of the regime like the Safavid clergy was a big blow to their ego and prestige. There were three elements that helped Shari'ati to survive such an attack on the clergy:

1. He had the support and blessing of one of the leading and most influential Ulama, namely, Ayatollah Taleghani.
2. The content and the message of Shari'ati's Alavid Shi'ism and its revolutionary nature found extreme support and popularity amongst the young and literate generation as well as the intellectuals of the country.
3. The regime found relief and amusement to see a Western educated intellectual waging a war on the Ulama.

Thus, Shari'ati called on the Ulama to reconsider their position and function among the masses. They had to convert

into revolutionary leaders of the masses and follow the path of the Shi'ite Imams and saints.

## CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Summary and conclusions

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 took the international community by surprise. This Revolution contained some astonishing elements and unique features, which distinguished it from the other great revolutions of mankind's modern history. Barrington Moore analyzed revolutions by dividing them into three large categories: bourgeois, fascist and communist.<sup>1</sup> Even though it might have contained attributes of each of these categories, the Persian Revolution of 1979 clearly does not fit into any of Barrington Moore's classifications, in that it was neither a communist nor a fascist or a bourgeois revolution. It does, however, qualify under what Theda Skocpol defined as "Social Revolutions", which are: "rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures"; and they are accompanied and, in part, carried through by class-based revolts from below.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Skocpol correctly observed that such revolutions have been rare in modern his-

<sup>1</sup>Barrington Moore, Jr., Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pp. xv-xxvi

<sup>2</sup>Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 4.



tory and that every one of them has occurred in a unique set of domestic and international conditions.<sup>2</sup> I have attempted to elucidate just such conditions, that contributed to and culminated in the revolutionary transformation of Iran in 1979.

The occurrence of this revolution in Iran shocked the international community as much as Karl Marx might have been surprised by the occurrence of a marxist revolution in Russia in 1917. Furthermore, considering the fact that there has been a universal trend toward secularization in almost all the nations of the world, the religious tone and character of the Persian Revolution added to its uniqueness. In the preceding chapters, I presented the ideological contributions and efforts of Dr. Ali Shari'ati to revive religion as a way of life and as an ideology for revolution in Iran. In order to determine how significant Shari'ati's role in the 1979 revolution had been, I undertook a sociopolitical study of Iran from the turn of the century, thus, providing context for his contributions.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, and even long before, Persian rulers sought technological modernization without political participation. Thus, they placed themselves in line with autocratic modernizers of both East and West. In the Iranian case, the autocrats hoped to select

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

tively import modernization from the West while ignoring the liberal and participatory elements. The first outcome of this tragic policy was seen in relation to the constitutional revolution of 1906, which guaranteed the participation of the masses in political affairs and provided a parliamentary system of government, but yet was violated by both Pahlavi monarchs. This pattern of conservative modernization has been studied by authors such as Barrington Moore, who pointed out that heterogeneous and unstable political systems ensued consequently. The result of the selective modernization by those rulers was, in Barrington Moore's metaphor, like a Victorian house with an electric kitchen, an insufficient bathroom, and leaky pipes hidden behind newly plastered walls, which ends in the collapse of the jerry-built restoration.

The conservative modernization of Iran can be described in a series of stages. We have seen how, through the exercise of power, the ruling dynasties sought to maximize economic development by imposing new social patterns of behavior on the underlying populations, while minimizing their political participation in the decision making process. Thus, the modernization of Iran was rapid, forced and despotic. This despotic character of the Iranian regime, during its modernization, explains, in part, the character and development of the opposition. It was a

revolution from above that would be undone by a counter-revolution from below. This dissertation has sought to outline the main characteristics of these revolutions, and to situate the main sources of resistance to the modernizing regimes. A paradox of this authoritarian modernization is that it alienated both non-authoritarian modernizers (secular progressives) and the traditional and religious leaders. As long as these two sectors of opposition remained separate, the regime could neutralize them by turning alternately against one and then, against the other. What would place the regime in great jeopardy, however, would be the convergence of these two into a large movement with the support of the masses. But, how likely or possible was an amalgam of secular criticism with old religious convictions? Perhaps only the ideological work of an intellectual, steeped both in the religious tradition and in modern forms of criticism, could conceivably prepare the ground for such a union. It was Ali Shari'ati's opportunity and work to construct this amalgam, using sociology as his main ingredient.

This dissertation has focused on Shari'ati's life and work because they provided the point of intersection of the structural and ideological tensions in Persian society. It was Shari'ati's creative response to this double process, i.e. of a structure determining a man and a man changing the

structure, which led me to organize my research in a series of necessary steps. First, it was important to identify and characterize the main stages in the modernization of Iran. It was clear to me that the manner of the utilization of resources and power by the ruling dynasties (Qajar and Pahlavi) often offended the religious values of the traditional groups, and also forestalled the mobilization of political actors who had modern perspectives on the state. The so called social and economic modernization in Iran increasingly isolated the regimes from the rest of the society. I have sought to interpret the Persian Revolution of 1979 as a consequence of this built-in contradiction.

I limited my research to a number of major events and personalities in Persian society, the most important of which were: The Constitutional Revolution of 1906, the rise to power of Dr. Mosaddegh in 1951-3 which led to the awakening of nationalist sentiments, and the religious-political crisis of 1963 coupled with Ayatollah Khomeini's domination of the spiritual leadership of the discontented Iranian masses. I believe these events were the chief influences in the process of growth and maturation of the political opposition. Their value lay in the socialization of a core of individuals into activist careers, the display to the masses of alternative possibilities of legitimacy, and in establishing the dimensions of issues that were most important

for the mobilization of support. The integration of diverse opposition groups confronting the state was a most important lesson that was gleaned from these earlier events, especially the integration of the religious class with the intelligentsia and secular political groups as had occurred in the Bast of 1891 and 1906. Indeed, this was found to be the strategy whose implementation culminated in the successful overthrow of the Shah's regime in 1979.

I believe that a sequential study of the above events, along with a review of the socio-political and economic conditions in Iran, is crucial to understanding the role and impact of Shari'ati on the Persian society of 1960's and 1970's. For this reason I began my dissertation by choosing a time frame that highlights significant episodes of social change in Persian society.

The seeds of modernization had been sown in Iran from the beginning of the 19th century, according to Hafez Farman Farmayan,<sup>4</sup> who wrote that it was the crown prince, Abbas Mirza, who first advocated serious changes in Persian society, after his army suffered two humiliating defeats at the hands of the Russian army. Realizing how relatively backward and weak Iran had become, he concluded that Persian

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<sup>4</sup>Hafez Farman Farmayan, "The Forces of Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Iran," in William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers, eds., Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 119-151.

students had to be sent abroad to investigate the progress and the changes that had taken place in Europe. "They shall study something of use to me, themselves and their country."<sup>5</sup> One of the five-member team that Abbas Mirza dispatched to Europe in 1815, Mirza Mohammad Saleh, learned the mechanics of printing. As a result of his knowledge, the country's first newspaper was published. It was also Mirza Saleh who talked extensively about the British system of government referring to it as the "country of Freedom".<sup>6</sup> Farman Farmayan considered Mirza Saleh to be the first author to introduce and elaborate on such issues as parliament and Majlis. Also pioneering in Mirza Saleh's memoirs was his criticism of the clergy in Turkey, whom he considered to be an obstacle to progress for that country.<sup>7</sup>

Despite a slow pace, it was the dedication and ambition of men such as Abbas Mirza, Mirza Saleh and Mirza Taqi Khan (the chief minister under Naser od-Din Shah who built the first polytechnic college in Iran in 1851) that bore fruit in the constitutional revolution of 1906. The plight of the country then, and the apathy of the Shahs on the one hand, and the desires of men of character to see progress and development on the other hand, led the country to the coal-

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-123.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

tion of the Bazaar and the Ulama which forced the much needed change. The constitutional revolution of 1906 proved to be a turning point in the modern history of Iran. It was the first time that the convergence of secular intellectuals and the progressive Ulama had led the nation to a major political achievement against a ruling dynasty. This victory, however, was short-lived, and one of the main players who was crucial in delaying democracy and parliamentarism in Iran was Reza Shah. His despotic rule soon ended the dream of a free and democratic society in Iran.

The succession of Reza Shah's son, at the onset of WWII, revived the hope for a rebirth of constitutional government in Iran. The relaxed political atmosphere at the beginning of Mohammad Reza Shah's rule also led to the rise of a popular government under premier Mosaddogh and the subsequent nationalization of Iranian natural resources.

The collapse of Dr. Mosaddogh's government and return of the Shah, with the collaboration and supervision of the American C.I.A. in 1953, was a repeat of a foreign governments' conspiracy to interfere with the domestic affairs of Iran. The result was the return of despotism and xenophobia to Iran in the second half of the 20th century. Like half a century earlier, the rise and fall of Dr. Mosaddogh brought very significant developments to Persian society. First, the nation was able to experience the rule

of law, parliamentarism, democracy and participation in the political and social affairs of the country. The other significant experience was a tragic and yet valuable lesson to be learned by the Persians. The fact was that as long as the secular forces of Dr. Mosaddegh had the following and support of the religious factions, led by Ayatollah Kashani, the movement survived. However, as soon as Ayatollah Kashani broke ties with Dr. Mosaddegh and abandoned the nationalists, Dr. Mosaddegh's popular and secular government became an easy prey for the royalists to crush and overthrow. Even though the embargo of Persian oil by Western states played a significant role in weakening Dr. Mosaddegh's government, had Ayatollah Kashani maintained his support for the nationalists, the 1953 coup might have been at least delayed (permanently). The overthrow of Dr. Mosaddegh with the aid of the U.S. government taught yet another lesson to the people of Iran, that was, not only the rulers, but Western governments as well, were against the establishment of democracy and parliamentarism in Iran. These xenophobic sentiments were clearly demonstrated during the 1979 revolution, but were puzzling to many who were not familiar with their source and history.

The 1953 coup confused and disoriented the entire nation and the reign of harsh repression followed for the next quarter of the century. Some harbored a sense of pessimism



about Islam and the Ulama, accusing them of deserting the nationalists, and the interest and well being of the nation. A decade later, however, the revival of opposition to the Shah's despotism was led by Ayatollah Khomeini who reestablished the role and reputation of the Ulama in the political affairs and well being of the nation. The quietist period which had followed the collapse of the Nationalist government in 1953 had led some intellectuals to believe that Islam was incapable of dealing with the everyday political life and affairs of Muslims. Furthermore, Islam had lost its appeal as a political ideology and there were not many people who believed that Islam as a faith could provide the right ingredients for revolutionary change.

For a decade, until 1963, the Shah ruled Iran with absolute power. The SAVAK was present everywhere. Whether this presence was physical or psychological, it had left its impact. Nobody even dared to say "Shah" without his titles "Aryamehr" or "His Majesty". The shadow of the SAVAK and the iron rule of the Shah were a nightmare for dissidents of the regime. Yet under these circumstances, a clergyman, while giving a sermon in the holy city of Ghom, shocked the nation as he denounced, cursed and humiliated the Shah. This sermon brought the nation to an insurgent state and made this clergyman a household name overnight. Ayatollah

Khomeini received nationwide recognition from both religious and political circles. Like Imam Ali, Ayatollah Khomeini became the leader of the oppressed against the political corruption and tyranny of the ruler. His stance gave new hope and a new dimension to the political struggle in Iran. The uprisings and the unrest of 1963 made the impossible, possible. The opponents of the Shah came to believe that the political and military machine of the Shah was not as secure and impregnable as everyone was led to believe. Then, unorganized protesters and demonstrators had many clashes with the police, in Tehran and other large cities. The news that protesters nearly reached the national radio station in Tehran was spread by word of mouth. This was a great victory for the supporters of the Ayatollah and dissidents of the regime. The unrest lasted for a few days and was eventually crushed, costing the lives of many who were waiting since 1953 to march against the Shah.

The political and social events that took place in Iran in a span of ten years marked a new era in the modern history of this country. Neither Dr. Mosaddegh, with the support of the popular National Front, nor Ayatollah Khomeini, with the support of the religious masses were able to bring down the regime of the Shah. "If we continue to join hands we will defeat the government," said Ayatollah Khomeini to

Ali Ahmad in 1964, in Tehran.<sup>2</sup> It had become quite evident that, as during the days of the constitution, a convergence of these forces was needed, that is between the religious and secular. It was in this political atmosphere that Ali Shari'ati returned to Iran, after the completion of his studies in France. With his education in sociology and Islamic history, Ali Shari'ati proved to be the only man in Iran at this crucial moment, who made this convergence possible. The religious and secular forces up to this point had shared the same goal which was to bring down the Shah's tyrannical rule, but had different ideologies and strategies. There was a desperate need for a better understanding and, if possible, a mutual ideology that would serve as a bridge to help bring these forces closer to each other. Furthermore, although the Ayatollah Khomeini had proved to be a charismatic and spiritual leader, there was still a need for an ideology capable of politicizing Islam. This ideology had to be able to attract non-religious as well as religious dissidents under a single umbrella.

Shari'ati had astutely recognized the needs of Persian society as well as the potentials of Shi'ism. He was able to establish himself as a sociologist as well as an expert on Islam, which gained tremendous popularity for him among

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<sup>2</sup>Roy Mottahedeh, The Mantle of the Prophet (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 303.

the youth and dissidents. Among the religious community, there was a mixed attitude toward Shari'ati. The important factor, however, was that the progressive members of the Ulama had nothing but, approval and praise for Shari'ati. This kind of attitude coming from someone like Ayatollah Taleghani, who was probably second only to Ayatollah Khomeini in popularity in the 1960's and 1970's, helped to widen and extend the diversity of Shari'ati's audience.

In the course of this dissertation, after a brief review of the socio-political conditions of modern Persia, I undertook a close study of Shari'ati's life from his childhood forward. His early upbringing could help us understand why he adopted the sort of life he had in Iran and France. He was politically active abroad as well as at home, and experienced several prison terms. The religious influence of his father was supplemented by the lasting affect that Louis Massignon and Georges Gurvitch had on Shari'ati in France. These three individuals were probably the most significant mentors who were crucial in their influence on Shari'ati and the specific direction that he adopted in his life. Mohammad Taghi (his father) and Louis Massignon exposed Ali to a kind of Islam that was unknown to many Muslims. Gurvitch taught him how to use and apply this faith in the context of a revolutionary ideology.

The events that took place in Iran had significant affect on Shari'ati. Dr. Mosaddegh had fascinated Ali with his

nationalist sentiments, and Ayatollah Khomeini impressed him as a Shi'ite leader. Finally, the Sorbonne enabled Ali to use his skills to coalesce all these diverse teachings and influences, to reconsider Shi'ism as a political ideology to be used as a means to confront the Shah's regime. His dedication to an ideology blending religious and revolutionary motives was evident throughout his writings and lectures, and so was his erudition in literature and philosophy, earlier in his life. More than just a new view of religion and its purposes, his work was an influence on the development of other opposition groups, including guerrilla and underground movements. Shari'ati's political and revolutionary interpretations of Shi'ism came at a pivotal moment, precisely after Persian society had been prepared for it by Ayatollah Khomeini. Shari'ati effectively filled the gap that was left by the Ayatollah's exile from Iran. The timing could not have been more ideal. Shari'ati returned home at a time when Iran was in social and political turmoil as a result of Ayatollah Khomeini's opposition to the Shah.

My analysis and reading of Shari'ati's works convinced me that he, too, alongside the Ayatollah, and in the footsteps of Abuzar and the "Preacher" in Sabzevar, was determined to mobilize the masses against what he viewed to be an unjust government. However, his approach was starkly different

from that of the charismatic Ayatollah. This was especially shown in his sociological and political presentation of Shi'ism and its agenda.

Ayatollah Khomeini's stand against the Shah centered on specific issues, such as the Shah's total dependence on the United States and his unconstitutional rule. Shari'ati, on the other hand, provided a new dimension by beginning the construction of a much needed political ideology which unfolded from the work of reviving and reinterpreting Islam. The newly established doctrinal center called "Ershad" in the northern outskirts of Tehran, became the arena where Shari'ati presented his views via nightly lectures on Islam and Shi'ism.

To better understand the political tone and content of Shari'ati's lectures, I made a comparison with another religious figure, a prominent member of the Ulama, who also gave lectures on Islam at Ershad. The focus of Ayatollah Motah'hari's lectures was on theological and philosophical issues of Islam and modernity. By contrast, Shari'ati's focus was on the social and political conditions in Iran. The most important element that distinguished the two was Shari'ati's use and presentation of a revitalized Islam as a conduit for mobilized masses to travel to higher political awareness.

The withdrawal of Ayatollah Motah'hari from Ershad was, in my view, symbolic of the triumph of the politicized Islam

in Iran at that time. The social and political mood and atmosphere of the country and the character and expectations of the audience at Ershad, were all in favor of Shari'ati. Ayatollah Motah'hari believed that Shari'ati was too much under the influence of Western sociology, and Shari'ati believed that Ayatollah Motah'hari was too much involved with meta-physics. Shari'ati explained the historical trajectory of Islam by means of inspirational figures, such as the Preacher who rose up against the Mongol regime, that seemed carefully aimed at providing a mobilization against the Shah. For this purpose, Islam was the ideology of choice, being both accessible to the masses and less vulnerable to successful repression than foreign political isms. Shari'ati saw in Shi'ism an ideal and perfect political ideology, because it possessed all the elements that one would require of a revolutionary ideology, and it dovetailed with the culture of the majority in Iran. His structure for this "perfect political and social party" contained the following elements:

**Imam Ali** as the model of a just ruler, who lived among the oppressed and was their guardian and spiritual leader;

**The Islamic Community** that existed during the life of the Prophet, which Imam Ali tried to restore after the era of the three caliphs, as the model of a "just society";

**Imam Hosein** as the model of an ideal Shi'ite leader, who did not bow and cave in to a tyrannical ruler. His

determined and absolute stand against oppression was to be the example for leadership of the Islamic community. By so saying, Shari'ati condemned the religious leaders (Rohaniyun) in Iran who were too acquiescent.

**The Karbela Protest** and the massacre of Imam Hosein was presented by Shari'ati as the strategical and psychological model to challenge the power of corrupt rulers, whose strengths were widely believed to be unchallengeable. Thus, this religious ideology called on Iranians to protest against their oppressive rulers regardless of the odds against success, and possible personal peril.

Despite his deliberate pragmatic political use of Shi'ism, Shari'ati was a believer, and not a cynic. He saw his task as being somewhat akin to Martin Luther's: to rearticulate and recover core Shi'ism. And this, not incidentally, would better fit and respond to the current socio-political conditions of the Muslim people in the world and not just the oppressed people of one society. Instead of focusing on only industrialized nations and their alienated workers as Karl Marx did, Shari'ati spoke to the oppressed people of all third world countries in general and Muslim societies in particular. He intended to express Shi'ism as particularly meaningful and useful to contemporary Muslim societies in their struggle against domestic corruption and dependence on foreign powers. He



sought to make it a vehicle of action rather than of contemplation to bring back sovereignty and self-identity to these societies. By displaying how the sixteenth century Safavids had succeeded in making religious institutions means to political ends, he legitimated such actions for contemporary Iran, only with a major distinction. The Safavids abused Shi'ism for tribal glories, whereas Shari'ati was determined to use Shi'ism for the return and glory of the Islamic Ummat, not an ethnic tribe (Safavids).

The incredulity and bemusement of the Pahlavi regime at the prospect of a Western educated intellectual warring against the Ulama provided a cover, protecting Shari'ati for a time. His support from the influential Ulama, Ayatollah Taleghani, and the highly popular and revolutionary nature of Shari'ati's message, were factors contributing to the success of his call to the masses to rise in revolt and to follow the path of the Shi'ite Imams. His message was widely accepted throughout the country, especially at high schools and universities, as well as in revolutionary circles. The tapes and the manuscripts of his lectures continued to be circulated, after the closing of Ershad by the Shah's regime (1973). At the same time, Ayatollah Khomeini continued to denounce the Shah from exile. It was the spiritual support and leadership of the Ayatollah on one hand, and the construction of a political ideology (revital

ized and politicized Shi'ism) by Shari'ati on the other, that culminated in the revolutionary outbreak of 1979. Like the Ayatollah, Shari'ati was also forced into exile in 1977, and only months later died under suspicious circumstances. Nonetheless, his portrait was carried alongside that of Ayatollah Khomeini and other revolutionary leaders, and his phrase, "na Sharghi, na Gharbi, Jumhori-yeh Eslami" (neither eastern nor western, but Islamic republic), was one of the most popularly chanted slogans of the revolution.

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